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FROM

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER.

BY

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS.

I. LITERARY NOVITIATE 9

II. SIR H. DAVY.—MR. GODWIN.—MRS. GRANT . 37

III. RECOLLECTIONS OF CHARLES LAMB . . . 62

IV. " " " " . . . 97

V. WALLADMOR 135

VI. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE 151

VII. " " " 190

VIII. " " " 216

IX. " " " 234

X. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH 255

XI. " " " 294

XII. " " " 338

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LITERARY REMINISCENCES.

CHAPTER I.

LITERARY NOVITIATE.

It was in the year 1801, whilst yet at school, that I made my first literary acquaintance. This was with a gentleman now dead, and little, at any time, known in the literary world; indeed, not at all; for his authorship was confined to a department of religious literature as obscure and as narrow in its influence as any that can be named — viz. Swedenborgianism. Already, on the bare mention of that word, a presumption arises against any man, that, writing much (or writing at all) for a body of doctrines so apparently crazy as those of Mr. Swedenborg, a man must have bid adieu to all good sense and manliness of mind. Indeed, this is so much of a settled case, that even to have written *against* Mr. Swedenborg would be generally viewed as a suspicious act, requiring explanation, and not very easily admitting of it. *Mr.* Swedenborg I call him, because I understand that his title to call himself 'Baron,' is imaginary; or rather he never *did* call himself by any title of honor — that mistake having originated amongst his followers in this country,

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who have chosen to designate him as the 'Honorable' and as the 'Baron' Swedenborg, by way of translating, to the ear of England, some one or other of those irrepresentable distinctions, *Legations Rath*, *Hofrath*, &c., which are tossed about with so much profusion in the courts of continental Europe, on both sides the Baltic. For myself, I cannot think myself qualified to speak of any man's writings without a regular examination of some one or two among those which his admirers regard as his best performances. Yet, as any happened to fall in my way, I have looked into them; and the impression left upon my mind was certainly not favorable to their author. They labored, to my feeling, with two opposite qualities of annoyance, but which I believe not uncommonly found united in lunatics — excessive dulness or matter-of-factness in the execution, with excessive extravagance in the conceptions. The result, at least, was most unhappy: for, of all writers, Swedenborg is the only one I ever heard of who has contrived to strip even the shadowy world beyond the grave of all its mystery and all its awe. From the very heaven of heavens, he has rent away the veil; no need for seraphs to 'tremble while they gaze;' for the familiarity with which all objects are invested, makes it impossible that even poor mortals should find any reason to tremble. Until I saw this book, I had not conceived it possible to carry an atmosphere so earthy, and steaming with the vapors of earth, into regions which, by early connection in our infant thoughts with the sanctities of death, have a hold upon the reverential affections such as they rarely lose. In this view, I should conceive that Swedenborg, if it were at all possible for him to become a popular author, would, at the same time, become immensely mischievous. He would dereligionize men beyond all other authors whatsoever.

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Little could this character of Swedenborg's writings — this, indeed, least of all — have been suspected from the temper, mind, or manners of my new friend. He was the most spiritual-looking, the most saintly in outward aspect, of all human beings whom I have known throughout life. He was rather tall, pale, and thin; the most unfleshly, the most of a sublimated spirit dwelling already more than half in some purer world, that a poet could have imagined. He was already aged when I first knew him, a clergyman of the Church of England; which may seem strange in connection with his Swedenborgianism, but he was however so. He was rector of a large parish in a large town, the more active duties of which parish were discharged by his curate; but much of the duties within the church were still discharged by himself, and with such exemplary zeal, that his parishioners, afterwards celebrating the fiftieth anniversary, or *golden* jubilee of his appointment to the living, (the twenty-fifth anniversary is called in Germany the silver — the fiftieth, the golden jubilee,) went farther than is usual, in giving a public expression and a permanent shape to their sentiments of love and veneration. I am surprised, on reflection, that this venerable clergyman should have been unvexed by Episcopal censures. He might, and I dare say would, keep back the grosser parts of Swedenborg's views from a public display; but, in one point, it would not be easy for a man so conscientious to make a compromise between his ecclesiastical duty and his private belief; for I have since found, though I did not then know it, that Swedenborg held a very peculiar creed on the article of atonement. From the slight pamphlet which let me into this secret I could not accurately collect the exact distinctions of his creed; but it was very different from that of the English Church.

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However, my friend continued unvexed for a good deal more than fifty years, enjoying that peace, external as well as internal, which, by so eminent a title, belonged to a spirit so evangelically meek and dovelike. I mention him chiefly for the sake of describing his interesting house and household, so different from all which belong to this troubled age, and his impressive style of living. The house seemed almost monastic; and yet it stood in the centre of one of the largest, busiest, noisiest towns in England; and the whole household seemed to have stepped out of their places in some Vandyke, or even some Titian picture, from a forgotten century and another climate. On knocking at the door, which of itself seemed an outrage to the spirit of quietness which brooded over the place, you were received by an ancient man-servant in the sober livery which belonged traditionally to Mr. Cl——'s family; for he was of a gentleman's descent, and had had the most finished education of a gentleman. This venerable old butler put me in mind always, by his noiseless steps, of the Castle of Indolence, where the porter or usher walked about in shoes that were shod with felt, lest any rude echoes might be roused. An ancient housekeeper was equally venerable, equally gentle in her deportment, quiet in her movements, and inaudible in her tread. One or other of these upper domestics, for the others rarely crossed my path, ushered me always into some room expressing, by its furniture, its pictures, and its colored windows, the solemn tranquillity which, for half a century, had reigned in that mansion. Among the pictures were more than one of St. John, the beloved apostle, by Italian masters. Neither the features nor the expression were very wide of Mr. Cl——'s own countenance; and, had it been possible to forget the gross character of Swedenborg's reveries, or to substitute for these

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fleshly dreams the awful visions of the Apocalypse, one might have imagined easily that the pure, saintly, and childlike evangelist had been once again recalled to this earth, and that this most quiet of mansions was some cell in the island of Patmos. Whence came the stained glass of the windows, I know not; and whether it were stained or painted. The revolutions of that art are known from Horace Walpole's account; and, nine years after this period, I found that, in Birmingham, where the art of staining glass was chiefly practised, no trifling sum was charged even for a vulgar lacing of no great breadth round a few drawing-room windows, which one of my friends thought fit to introduce as an embellishment. These windows, however, of my clerical friend were really '*storied* windows,' having Scriptural histories represented upon them. A crowning ornament to the library or principal room, was a sweet-toned organ, ancient, and elaborately carved in its wood-work, at which my venerable friend readily sate down, and performed the music of anthems as often as I asked him, sometimes accompanying it with his voice, which was tremulous from old age, but neither originally unmusical, nor (as might be perceived) untrained.

Often, from the storms and uproars of this world, I have looked back upon this most quiet and I believe most innocent abode, (had I said saintly, I should hardly have erred,) connecting it in thought with *Little Gidding*, the famous mansion (in Huntingdonshire, I believe) of the Farrers, an interesting family in the reigns of James I. and Charles I. Of the Farrers there is a long and circumstantial biographical account, and of the conventual discipline maintained at Little Gidding. For many years it was the rule at Gidding — and it was the wish of the Farrers to have transmitted that practice through suc-

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ceeding centuries — that a musical or cathedral service should be going on at every hour of night and day in the chapel of the mansion. Let the traveller, at what hour he would, morning or evening, summer or winter, and in what generation or century soever, happen to knock at the gate of Little Gidding, it was the purpose of Nicholas Farrer — a sublime purpose — that always he should hear the blare of the organ, sending upwards its surging volumes of melody, God's worship for ever proceeding, anthems of praise for ever ascending, and *jubilates* echoing without end or known beginning. One stream of music, in fact, never intermitting, one vestal fire of devotional praise and thanksgiving, was to connect the beginnings with the ends of generations, and to link one century into another. Allowing for the sterner asceticism of N. Farrer — partly arising out of the times, partly out of personal character, and partly, perhaps, out of his travels in Spain — my aged friend's arrangement of the day, and the training of his household, might seem to have been modelled on the plans of Mr. Farrer, whom, however, he might never have heard of. There was also, in each house, the same union of religion with some cultivation of the ornamental arts, or some expression of respect for them. In each case, a monastic severity, that might, under other circumstances, have terminated in the gloom of a La Trappe, had been softened, by English sociality, and by the habits of a gentleman's education, into a devotional pomp, reconcilable with Protestant views. When, however, remembering this last fact in Mr. Cl——'s case, (the fact I mean of his liberal education,) I have endeavored to explain the possibility of one so much adorned by all the accomplishments of a high-bred gentleman, and one so truly pious, falling into the grossness — almost the sensuality — which appears to besiege the

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visions of Swedenborg; I fancy that the whole may be explained out of the same cause which occasionally may be descried, through a distance of two complete centuries, as weighing heavily upon the Farrers — viz. the dire monotony of daily life, when visited by no irritations either of hope or fear — no hopes from ambition, no fears from poverty.

Nearly (if not quite) sixty years did my venerable friend inhabit the same parsonage house, without any incident more personally interesting to himself than a cold or a sore throat. And I suppose that he resorted to Swedenborg — reluctantly, perhaps, at the first — as to a book of fairy tales connected with his professional studies. And one thing I am bound to add in candor, which may have had its weight with him, that, more than once, on casually turning over a volume of Swedenborg, I have certainly found most curious and felicitous passages of comment — passages which extracted a brilliant meaning from numbers, circumstances, or trivial accidents, apparently without significance or object, and gave to things, without a place or a habitation in the critic's regard, a value as hieroglyphics or cryptical cyphers, which struck me as elaborately ingenious. This acknowledgment I make not so much in praise of Swedenborg, whom I must still continue to think a madman, as in excuse for Mr. Cl——. It may easily be supposed, that a person of Mr. Cl——'s consideration and authority, was not regarded with indifference by the general body of the Swedenborgians. At his motion it was, I believe, that a society was formed for procuring and encouraging a translation into English, of Swedenborg's entire works, most of which are written in Latin. Several of these translations are understood to have been executed personally by Mr. Cl——; and in this obscure way, for anything I know, he

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may have been an extensive author. But it shows the upright character of the man, that never, in one instance, did he seek to bias my opinions in this direction. Upon every other subject, he trusted me confidentially — and, notwithstanding my boyish years, (15–16,) as his equal. His regard for me, when thrown by accident in his way, had arisen upon his notice of my fervent simplicity, and my unusual thoughtfulness. Upon these merits, I had gained the honorable distinction of a general invitation to his house, without exception as to days and hours, when few others could boast of any admission at all. The common ground on which we met was literature — more especially the Greek and Roman literature; and much he exerted himself, in a spirit of the purest courtesy, to meet my animation upon these themes. But the interest on his part was too evidently a secondary interest in *me*, for whom he talked, and not in the subject: he spoke much from memory, as it were of things that he had once felt, and little from immediate sympathy with the author; and his animation was artificial, though his courtesy, which prompted the effort, was the truest and most unaffected possible.

The connection between us must have been interesting to an observer; for, though I cannot say with Wordsworth, of old Daniel and his grandson, that there were 'ninety good years of fair and foul weather' between us, there were, however, sixty, I imagine, at the least; whilst, as a bond of connection, there was nothing at all that I know of beyond a common tendency to reverie, which is a bad link for a *social* connection. The little ardor, meantime, with which he had, for many years, participated in the interests of this world, or all that it inherits, was now rapidly departing. Daily and consciously he was loosening all ties which bound him to earlier recollections; and,

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in particular, I remember — because the instance was connected with my last farewell visit as it proved — that for some time he was engaged daily in renouncing with solemnity, (though often enough in cheerful words,) book after book of classical literature, in which he had once taken particular delight. Several of these, after taking his final glance at a few passages to which a pencil reference in the margin pointed his eye, he delivered to me as memorials in time to come of himself. The last of the books given to me under these circumstances, was a Greek 'Odyssey,' in Clarke's edition. 'This,' said he, 'is nearly the sole book remaining to me of my classical library — which, for same years, I have been dispersing amongst my friends. Homer I retained to the last, and the "Odyssey," by preference to the "Iliad," both in compliance with my own taste, and because this very copy was my chosen companion for evening amusement, during my freshman's term at Trinity College, Cambridge — whither I went early in the spring of 1743. Your own favorite Grecian is Euripides; but still you must value — we must all value — Homer. I, even old as I am, could still read him with delight; and as long as any merely human composition ought to occupy my time, I should have made an exception in behalf of this solitary author. But I am a soldier of Christ; the enemy, the last enemy, cannot cannot be far off; *sarcinas colligere* is, at my age, the watchword for every faithful sentinel, hourly to keep watch and ward, to wait, and to be vigilant. This very day, I have taken my farewell glance at Homer; for I must no more be found seeking my pleasure amongst the works of man; and, that I may not be tempted to break my resolution, I make over this my last book to you.'

Words to this effect, uttered with his usual solemnity, accompanied his gift; and, at the same time, he added,

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without any separate comment, a little pocket Virgil — the one edited by Alexander Cunningham, the bitter antagonist of Bentley — with a few annotations placed at the end. The act was in itself a solemn one; something like taking the veil for a nun — a final abjuration of the world's giddy agitations. And yet to him — already and for so long a time linked so feebly to anything that could be called the world, and living in a seclusion so profound — it was but as if an anchorite should retire from his outer to his inner cell. Me, however, it impressed powerfully in after years; because this act of self-dedication to the next world, and of parting from the intellectual luxuries of this, was also, in fact, though neither of us at the time knew it to be such, the scene of his final parting with myself. Immediately after his solemn speech, on presenting me with the 'Odyssey,' he sat down to the organ, sang a hymn or two, then chanted part of the liturgy, and, finally, at my request, performed the anthem so well known in the English Church service — the collect for the seventh Sunday after Trinity — (*Lord of all power and might, &c.*) It was summer — about half after nine in the evening; the light of day was still lingering, and just strong enough to illuminate the Crucifixion, the Stoning of the Proto-martyr, and other grand emblazonries of the Christian faith, which adorned the rich windows of his library. Knowing the early hours of his household, I now received his usual fervent adieus — which, without the words, had the sound and effect of a benediction — felt the warm pressure of his hand, saw dimly the outline of his venerable figure, more dimly his saintly countenance, and quitted that gracious presence, which, in this world, I was destined no more to revisit. The night was one in the first half of July, 1802; in the second half of which, or very early in August, I quitted school clandes-

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tinely, and consequently the neighborhood of Mr. Cl——. Some years after, I saw his death announced in all the public journals, as having occurred at Leamington Spa, then in the springtime of its medicinal reputation. Farewell, early friend! holiest of men whom it has been my lot to meet! Yes, I repeat, thirty-five years are past since then, and I have yet seen few men approaching to this venerable clergyman in paternal benignity — none certainly in child-like purity, apostolic holiness, or in perfect alienation of heart from the spirit of this fleshly world.

I have delineated the habits and character of Mr. Cl—— at some length, chiefly because a connection is rare and interesting between parties so widely asunder in point of age — one a schoolboy, and the other almost an octogenarian: to quote a stanza from one of the most spiritual sketches of Wordsworth —

> We talked with open heart and tongue,
> Affectionate and free —
> A pair of friends, though I was young,
> And Matthew seventy-three.

I have stated a second reason for this record, in the fact that Mr. Cl—— was the first of my friends who had any connection with the press. At one time I have reason to believe that this connection was pretty extensive, though not publicly avowed; and so far from being lucrative, that at first I believe it to have been expensive to him; and whatever profits might afterwards arise, were applied, as much of his regular income, to the benefit of others. Here, again, it seems surprising that a spirit so beneficent and, in the amplest sense, charitable, could coalesce in any views with Swedenborg, who, in some senses, was not charitable. Swedenborg had been scandalized by a notion

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which, it seems, he found prevalent amongst the poor of the Continent — viz., that, if riches were a drag and a negative force on the road to religious perfection, poverty must be positive title *per se*, to the favor of Heaven. Grievously offended with this error, he came almost to hate poverty as a presumptive indication of this offensive heresy; scarcely would he allow it an indirect value, as removing in many cases the occasions or incitements of evil. No: being in itself neutral and indifferent, he argued that it had become erroneously a ground of presumptuous hope; whilst the rich man, aware of his danger, was, in some degree, armed against it by fear and humility. And, in this course of arguing and of corresponding feeling, Mr. Swedenborg had come to hate the very name of a poor candidate for Heaven, as bitterly as a sharking attorney hates the applications of a pauper client. Yet so entirely is it true, that 'to the pure, all things are pure,' and that perfect charity 'thinketh no ill,' but is gifted with a power to transmute all things into its own resemblance — so entirely is all this true, that this most spiritual, and, as it were, disembodied of men, could find delight in the dreams of the very 'fleshliest incubus' that has intruded amongst heavenly objects; and, secondly, this benignest of men found his own pure feelings not outraged by one who threw a withering scowl over the far larger half of his fellow-creatures.

Concurrently with this acquaintance, so impressive and so elevating to me, from the unusual sanctity of Mr. Cl——'s character, I formed another with a well-known coterie, more avowedly, and in a more general sense, literary, resident at Liverpool or its neighborhood. In my sixteenth year, I had accompanied my mother and family on a summer's excursion to Everton, a well known village upon the heights immediately above Liverpool; though

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by this time I believe it has thrown out so many fibres of connection, as to have become a mere quarter or suburban 'process,' (to speak by anatomical phrase,) of the great town below it. In those days, however, distant by one-third of a century from ours, Everton was still a distinct village, (for a mile of ascent is worth three of level ground, in the way of effectual separation;) it was delightfully refreshed by marine breezes, though raised above the sea so far, that its thunders could be heard only under favorable circumstances. There we had a cottage for some months; and the nearest of our neighbors happened to be that Mr. Clarke the banker, to whom acknowledgments are made in the *Lorenzo the Magnificent*, for aid in procuring MSS. and information from Italy. This gentleman called on my mother, merely in the general view of offering neighborly attentions to a family of strangers. I, as the eldest of my brothers, and already with strong literary propensities, had received a general invitation to his house. Thither I went, indeed, early and late; and there I met Mr. Roscoe, Dr. Currie, (who had just at that time published his Life and Edition of Burns,) and Mr. Shepherd of Gatacre, the author of some works on Italian literature, (particularly a Life of *Poggio Bracciolini*,) and, since then, well known to all England by his Reform politics.

There were other members of this society — some, like myself, visiters merely to that neighborhood; but those I have mentioned were the chief. Here I had an early opportunity of observing the natural character and tendencies of merely literary society — by which society I mean all such as, having no strong distinctions in power of thinking or in native force of character, are yet raised into circles of pretension and mark, by the fact of having written a book, or of holding a notorious connection with some department or other of the periodical press. No

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society is so vapid and uninteresting in its natural quality, none so chèerless and petrific in its influence upon others. Ordinary people, in such company, are in general repressed from uttering with cordiality the natural expression of their own minds or temperaments, under a vague feeling of some peculiar homage due, or at least customarily paid to those lions: such people are no longer at their ease, or masters of their own natural motions in their own natural freedom; whilst indemnification of any sort is least of all to be looked for from the literary dons who have diffused this unpleasant atmosphere of constraint. They disable others, and yet do nothing themselves to fill up the void they have created. One and all — unless by accident people of unusual originality, power, and also nerve, so as to be able without trepidation to face the expectations of men — the literary class labor under two opposite disqualifications for a good tone of conversation. From causes visibly explained, they are either spoiled by the vices of reserve, and of over-consciousness directed upon themselves — this is one extreme; or, where manliness of mind has prevented this, beyond others of equal or inferior natural power, they are apt to be desperately commonplace. The first defect is an accident arising out of the rarity of literary pretensions; and would rapidly subside as the proportion became larger of practising literati to the mass of educated people. But the other is an adjunct scarcely separable from the ordinary prosecution of a literary career, and growing in fact out of literature *per se*, as literature is generally understood. That same day, says Homer, which makes a man a slave, robs him of half his value. That same hour which first awakens a child to the consciousness of being observed and to the sense of admiration, strips it of its freedom and unpremeditated graces of motion. Awkwardness at the least —

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and too probably as a consequence of *that*, affectation and conceit — follow hard upon the consciousness of special notice or admiration. The very attempt to disguise embarrassment, too often issues in a secondary and more marked embarrassment.

Another mode of reserve arises with some literary men, who believe themselves to be in possession of novel ideas. Cordiality of communication, or ardor of dispute, might betray them into a revelation of those golden thoughts, sometimes into a necessity of revealing them, since, without such aid, it might be impossible to maintain theirs in the discussion. On this principle it was — a principle of deliberate unsocial reserve — that Adam Smith is said to have governed his conversation: he professed to put a bridle on his words, lest by accident a pearl should drop out of his lips amongst the vigilant bystanders. And in no case would he have allowed himself to be engaged in a disputation, because both the passions of dispute and the necessities of dispute are alike apt to throw men off their guard. A most unamiable reason it certainly is, which places a man in one constant attitude of self-protection against petty larceny. And yet, humiliating as that may be to human nature, the furtive propensities or instincts of petty larceny are diffused most extensively through all ranks — directed, too, upon a sort of property far more tangible and more ignoble as respects the possible motives of the purloiner, than any property in subjects purely intellectual. Rather more than ten years ago, a literary man of the name of Alton, published, some little time before his own death, a very searching essay upon this chapter of human integrity — arraying a large list of common cases, (cases of hats, gloves, umbrellas, books, newspapers, &c.) where the claim of ownership, left to itself and unsupported by accidents of shame and expo-

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sure, appeared to be weak indeed amongst classes of society prescriptively 'respectable.' And yet, for a double reason, literary larceny is even more to be feared; both because it is countenanced by a less ignoble quality of temptation, and because it is far more easy of achievement — *so* easy, indeed, that it may be practised without any clear accompanying consciousness.

I have myself witnessed or been a party to a case of the following kind: — A new truth — suppose for example, a new doctrine or a new theory — was communicated to a very able man in the course of conversation, not *didactically*, or directly *as* a new truth, but *polemically* communicated as an argument in the current of a dispute. What followed? Necessarily it followed that a very able man would not be purely *passive* in receiving this new truth; that he would *co-operate* with the communicator in many ways — as by raising objections, by half dissipating his own objections, and in a variety of other co-agencies. In such cases, a very clever man does in effect half generate the new idea for himself, but then he does this entirely under your leading; you stand ready at each point of possible deviation, to warn him away from the wrong turn — from the turn which leads nowhither or the turn which leads astray. Yet the final result has been, that the *catechumen*, under the full consciousness of *self*-exertion, has so far confounded his just and true belief of having contributed to the evolution of the doctrine *quoad* his own apprehension of it, with the far different case of having evolved the truth itself into light, as to go off with the firm impression that the doctrine had been a product of his own. There is therefore ground enough for the jealousy of Adam Smith, since a robbery may be committed unconsciously; though, by the way, it is not a peril peculiarly applicable to himself, who has not so

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much succeeded in discovering new truths as in establishing a logical connection amongst old ones.

On the other hand, it is not by reserve, whether of affectation or of Smithian jealousy, that the majority of literary people offend — at least not by the latter; for, so far from having much novelty to protect against pirates, the most general effect of literary pursuits is to tame down all points of originality to one standard of insipid monotony. I shall not go into the reasons for this. I make my appeal to the matter of fact. Try a Parisian populace, very many of whom are highly cultivated by reading, against a body of illiterate rustics. Mr. Scott of Aberdeen, in his 'Second Tour to Paris,' (1815,) tells us that, on looking over the shoulder of poor stall women selling trifles in the street, he usually found them reading Voltaire, Rousseau, or even (as I think he adds) Montesquieu; but, notwithstanding the polish which such reading both presumes as a previous condition and produces as a natural effect, yet no people could be more lifeless in their minds, or more barren of observing faculties than they; and so he describes them. Words! words! nothing but words! On the other hand, listen to the conversation of a few scandalous village dames collected at a tea-table. Vulgar as the spirit may be which possesses them, and not seldom malicious, still how full of animation and of keen perception it will generally be found, and of a learned spirit of connoisseurship in human character, by comparison with the *fade* generalities, and barren recollections of mere literati!

All this was partially illustrated in the circle to which I was now presented. Mr. Clarke was not an author, and he was by much the most interesting person of the whole. He had travelled, and, particularly, he had travelled in Italy — then an aristocratic distinction; had a small, but interesting picture gallery; and, at this time, amused him-

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self by studying Greek, for which purpose he and myself met at sunrise every morning through the summer, and read Æschylus together. These meetings, at which we sometimes had the company of any stranger who might happen to be an amateur in Greek, were pleasant enough to my schoolboy vanity — placing me in the position of teacher and guide, to men old enough to be my grandfathers. But the dinner parties, at which the literati sometimes assembled in force, were far from being equally amusing. Mr. Roscoe was simple and manly in his demeanor; but there was the feebleness of a mere *belle-lettrist*, a mere man of *virtù*, in the style of his sentiments on most subjects. Yet he was a politician, and took an ardent interest in politics, and wrote upon politics — all which are facts usually presuming some vigor of mind. And he wrote, moreover, on the popular side, and with a boldness which, in that day, when such politics were absolutely disreputable, seemed undeniably to argue great moral courage. But these were accidents arising out of his connection with the Whig party, or (to speak more accurately) with the *Opposition* party in Parliament; by whom he was greatly caressed. Mr. Fox, the Duchess of Devonshire, Mr. Sheridan, and all the *powers* on that side the question, showed him the most marked attention in a great variety of forms; and this it was, not any native propensity for such speculations, which drove him into phamphleteering upon political questions. Mr. Fox (himself the very feeblest of party writers) was probably sincere in his admiration of Mr. Roscoe's pamphlets; and did seriously think him, as I know that he described him in private letters, an antagonist well matched against Burke; and *that* he afterwards became in form. The rest of the world wondered at his presumption, or at his gross miscalculation of his own peculiar powers. An eminent person,

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in after years, (about 1815,) speaking to me of Mr. Roscoe's political writings, especially those which had connected his name with Burke, declared that he always felt of him in that relation, not so much as of a feeble man, but absolutely as of a *Sporus*, (that was his very expression,) or a man emasculated. Right or wrong in his views, he showed the most painful defect of good sense and prudence, in confronting his own understanding, so plain and homely, with the Machiavelian Briareus of a hundred arms — the Titan whom he found in Burke: all the advantages of a living antagonist over a dead one, could not compensate odds so fearful in original power.

It was a striking illustration of the impotence of mere literature against natural power and mother wit, that the only man who was considered indispensable in these parties, for giving life and impulse to their vivacity, was a tailor; and not, I was often assured, a person deriving a designation from the craft of those whose labors he supported as a capitalist, but one who drew his own honest daily bread from his own honest needle, except when he laid it aside for the benefit of drooping literati, who needed to be watered with his wit. Wit, perhaps, in a proper sense, he had not — it was rather drollery, and, sometimes, even buffoonery. These, in the lamentable absence of the tailor, could be furnished of an inferior quality by Mr. Shepherd, who (as may be imagined from this fact) had but little dignity in private life. I know not how far he might alter in these respects; but, certainly, at that time, (1801–2,) he was decidedly or could be a buffoon; and seemed even ambitious of the title, by courting notice for his grotesque manner and coarse stories, more than was altogether compatible with the pretensions of a scholar and a clergyman. I must have leave to think that such a man could not have emerged from

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any great university, or from any but a sectarian training. Indeed, about Poggio himself there were circumstances which would have indisposed any regular clergyman of the Church of England or of the Scottish Kirk, to usher him into the literature of his country. With what coarseness and low buffoonery have I heard this Mr. Shepherd in those days run down the bishops then upon the bench, but especially those of any public pretensions or reputation, as Horsely and Porteus, and, in connection with them, the pious Mrs. Hannah More! Her he could not endure. . . . . Of this gentleman having said something disparaging, I am bound to go on and add, that I believe him to have been at least a truly upright man — talking often wildly, but incapable of doing a conscious wrong to any man, be his party what it might; and, in the midst of fun or even buffoonery, a real, and, upon occasion, a stern patriot. Mr. Canning and others he opposed to the teeth upon the Liverpool hustings; and would take no bribe, as others did, from literary feelings of sympathy, or (which is so hard for an amiable mind to resist) from personal applications of courtesy and respect. Amusing it is to look back upon any political work of Mr. Shepherd's, as upon his 'Tour to France' in 1815, and to know that the pale pink of his Radicalism was then accounted deep, deep scarlet.

Nothing can better serve to expound the general force of intellect amongst the Liverpool coterie than the quality of their poetry, and the general standard which they set up in poetry. Not that even in their errors, as regarded poetry, they were of a magnitude to establish any standard or authority in their own persons. Imitable or seducing there could be nothing in persons who wrote verses occasionally, and as a πάρεργον or by-labor, and were themselves the most timid of imitators. But to

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me, who, in that year, 1801, already knew of a grand renovation of poetic power — of a new birth in poetry, interesting not so much to England as to the human mind — it was secretly amusing to contrast the little artificial usages of their petty traditional knack, with the natural forms of a divine art — the difference being pretty much as between an American lake, Ontario or Superior, and a carp pond or a tench preserve. Mr. Roscoe had just about this time published a translation from the *Balia* of Luigi Tansillo — a series of dullish lines, with the moral purpose of persuading young women to suckle their own children. The brilliant young Duchess of Devonshire, some half century ago, had, for a frolic — a great lady's caprice — set a precedent in this way; against which, however, in that rank, medical men know that there is a good deal to be said; and in ranks more extensive than those of the Duchess, it must be something of an Irish bull to suppose any *general* neglect of this duty, since, upon so large a scale, whence could come the vicarious nurses? There is, therefore, no great sense in the fundamental idea of the poem, because the abuse denounced cannot be large enough; but the prefatory sonnet, addressed to the translator's wife, as one at whose maternal breast 'six sons successive' had hung in infancy — this is about the one sole bold, natural thought, or natural expression of feeling, to which Mr. Roscoe had committed himself in verse. Everywhere else, the most timid and blind servility to the narrowest of conventional usages, conventional ways of viewing things, conventional forms of expression, marks the style. For example, Italy is always *Italia*, Scotland *Scotia*, France *Gallia;* so inveterately had the mind, in this school of feeling, been trained, alike in the highest things and in the lowest, to a horror of throwing itself

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boldly upon the great *realities* of life: even names must be fictions for *their* taste. Yet what comparison between '*France*, an Ode,' and '*Gallia*, an Ode?'—Dr. Currie was so much occupied with his professional duties, that of him I saw but little. His edition of Burns was just then published, (I think in that very month,) and in everybody's hands. At that time, he was considered not unjust to the memory of the man, and (however constitutionally phlegmatic, or with little enthusiasm, at least in external show) not much below the mark in his appreciation of the poet.

So stood matters some twelve or fourteen years; after which period, a 'craze' arose on the subject of Burns, which allowed no voice to be heard but that of zealotry and violent partisanship. The first impulse to this arose out of an oblique collision between Lord Jeffrey and Mr. Wordsworth; the former having written a disparaging critique upon Burns's pretensions—a little, perhaps, too much colored by the fastidiousness of long practice in the world, but, in the main, speaking some plain truths on the quality of Burns's understanding, as expressed in his epistolary compositions. Upon which, in his celebrated letter to Mr. James Gray, the friend of Burns, himself a poet, and then a master in the High School of Edinburgh, Mr. Wordsworth commented with severity, proportioned rather to his personal resentments towards Lord Jeffrey than to the quantity of wrong inflicted upon Burns. Mr. Wordsworth's letter, in so far as it was a record of embittered feeling, might have perished; but, as it happened to embody some profound criticisms, applied to the art of biography, and especially to the delicate task of following a man of original genius through his personal infirmities or his constitutional aberrations—this fact, and its relation to Burns and the

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author's name, have all combined to embalm it. Its momentary effect, in conjunction with Lord Jeffrey's article, was to revive the interest (which, for some time, had languished under the oppression of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron) in all that related to Burns. Fresh Lives appeared in a continued succession, until, upon the death of Lord Byron in 1824, Mr. Allan Cunningham, who had personally known Burns, so far as a boy *could* know a mature man, gave a new impulse to the interest, by an impressive paper, in which he contrasted the circumstances of Burns's death with those of Lord Byron's; and also the two funerals — both of which, one altogether, and the other in part, Mr. Cunningham had personally witnessed. A man of genius, like Mr. Cunningham, throws a new quality of interest upon all which he touches; and having since brought fresh rēsearch and the illustrative power of the arts to bear upon the subject, and all this having gone on concurrently with the great modern revolution in literature — that is, the great extension of a *popular* interest, through the astonishing reductions of price — the result is, that Burns has, at length, become a national, and, therefore, in a certain sense, a privileged subject, which, in a perfect sense, he was *not*, until the controversial management of his reputation had irritated the public attention. Dr. Currie did not address the same alert condition of the public feeling, nor, by many hundred degrees, so *diffused* a condition of any feeling which might imperfectly exist, as a man must consciously address in these days, whether as the biographer or the critic of Burns. The lower-toned enthusiasm of the public was not of a quality to irritate any little enthusiasm which the worthy Doctor might have felt. The public of that day felt with regard to Burns exactly as with regard to Bloomfield — not that the quality

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of his poems was then the staple of the interest, but the extraordinary fact that a ploughman or a lady's shoemaker should have written any poems at all. The sole difference in the two cases, as regarded by the public of that day, was, that Burns's case was terminated by a premature, and, for the public, a very sudden death: this gave a personal interest to his case, which was wanting in the other; and a direct result of this was, that his executors were able to lay before the world a series of his letters recording his opinions upon a considerable variety of authors, and his feelings under many ordinary occasions of life.

Dr. Currie, therefore, if phlegmatic, as he certainly was, must be looked upon as upon a level with the public of his own day — a public how different, different by how many centuries, from the world of this present 1837! One thing I remember which powerfully illustrates the difference. Burns, as we all know, with his peculiarly wild and almost ferocious spirit of independence, came a generation too soon. In this day, he would have been forced to do that, clamorously called upon to do that, and would have found his pecuniary interest in doing that, which in his own generation merely to attempt doing, loaded him with the reproach of Jacobinism. It must be remembered that the society of Liverpool wits, on whom my retrospect is now glancing, were all Whigs — all, indeed, fraternizers with French republicanism. Yet so it was, that — not once, not twice, but daily almost, in the numerous conversations naturally elicited by this Liverpool monument to Burns's memory — I heard every one, clerk or layman, heartily agreeing to tax Burns with ingratitude and with pride falsely directed, because he sate uneasily or restively under the bridle-hand of his noble self-called '*patrons*.' Aristocracy, then — the

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essential spirit of aristocracy — this I found was not less erect and clamorous amongst partisan democrats — democrats who were such merely in a party sense of supporting his Majesty's Opposition against his Majesty's servants — than it was or could be among the most bigoted of the professed feudal aristocrats. For my part, at this moment, when all the world was reading Currie's monument to the memory of Burns and the support of his family, I felt and avowed my feeling most loudly — that Burns was wronged, was deeply, memorably wronged. A £10 bank note, by way of subscription for a few copies of an early edition of his poems — this is the outside that I could ever see proof given of Burns having received anything in the way of *patronage;* and doubtless this would have been gladly returned, but from the dire necessity of dissembling.

Lord Glencairn is the 'patron' for whom Burns appears to have felt the most sincere respect. Yet even he — did he give him more than a seat at his dinner table? Lord Buchan again, whose liberalities are by this time pretty well appreciated in Scotland, exhorts Burns, in a tone of one preaching upon a primary duty of life, to exemplary gratitude towards a person who had given him absolutely nothing at all. The man has not yet lived to whose happiness it was more essential that he should live unencumbered by the sense of obligation; and, on the other hand, the man has not lived upon whose independence as professing benefactors so many people practised, or who found so many others ready to ratify and give value to their pretences.* Him, whom beyond most

* Jacobinism — although the seminal principle of all political evil in all ages alike of advanced civilization — is natural to the heart of man, and, in a qualified sense, may be meritorious. A good man, a high-minded man, in certain circumstances, *must* be a Jacobin in a certain

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men, nature had created with the necessity of conscious independence, all men besieged with the assurance that he was, must be, ought to be dependent; nay, that it was his primary duty to be grateful for his dependence. I have not looked into any edition of Burns, except once for a quotation, since this year 1801 — when I read the whole in Currie's edition, and had opportunities of meeting the editor — and once subsequently upon occasion of a fifth or supplementary volume being published. I know not, therefore, how this matter has been managed by succeeding editors, such as Allan Cunningham, far more capable of understanding Burns's situation, from the previous struggles of their own honorable lives, and Burns's feelings, from something of congenial power.

I, in this year, 1801, when in the company of Dr. Currie, did not forget, and, with some pride I say that I stood alone in remembering, the very remarkable position of Burns: not merely that, with his genius, and with the intellectual pretensions, generally, of his family, he should have been called to a life of early labor, and of labor unhappily not prosperous, but also that he, by accident about the proudest of human spirits, should have been by

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sense. The aspect under which Burns's jacobinism appears is striking: there is a thought which an observing reader will find often recurring, which expresses its peculiar bitterness. It is this: — the necessity which in old countries exists for the laborer humbly to beg *permission* that he may labor. To eat in the sweat of a man's brow — that is bad; and that is a curse, and pronounced such by God. But when *that* is all, the laborer is by comparison happy. The second curse makes *that* a jest: he must sue, he must sneak, he must fawn like an Oriental slave, in order to win his fellow-man, in Burns's indignant words — 'To give him *leave* to toil.' That was the scorpion thought that was for ever shooting its sting into Burns's meditations, whether forward-looking or backward-looking; and that considered, there arises a world of allowance for that vulgar bluster of independence which Lord Jeffrey, with so much apparent reason, charges upon his prose writings.

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accident summoned, beyond all others, to eternal recognitions of some mysterious gratitude, which he owed to some mysterious patrons little and great, whilst yet of all men, perhaps, he reaped the least obvious or known benefit from any patronage that has ever been put on record. Most men, if they reap little from patronage, are liberated from the claims of patronage; or if they are summoned to a galling dependency, have at least the fruits of their dependency. But it was this man's unhappy fate — with an early and previous irritability on this very point — to find himself saddled, by his literary correspondents, with all that was odious in dependency, whilst he had every hardship to face that is most painful in unbefriended poverty.

On this view of the case, I talked, then, being a schoolboy, with and against the first editor of Burns: I did not, and I do not, profess to admire the letters, (that is, the prose,) all or any, of Burns. I felt that they were liable to the charges of Lord Jeffrey, and to others beside; that they do not even express the natural vigor of Burns's mind, but are at once vulgar, tawdry, coarse, and commonplace; neither was I a person to affect any profound sympathy with the general character and temperament of Burns, which has often been described as 'of the earth, earthy' — unspiritual — animal — beyond those of most men equally intellectual. But still I comprehended his situation; I had for ever ringing in my ears, during that summer of 1801, those groans which ascended to heaven from his over-burthened heart — those harrowing words, '*To give him leave to toil*,' which record almost a reproach to the ordinances of God — and I felt that upon him, amongst all the children of labor, the primal curse had fallen heaviest and sunk deepest. Feelings such as these I had the courage to express: a personal compli-

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ment, or so, I might now and then hear; but all were against me on the *matter*. Dr. Currie said — 'Poor Burns! such notions had been his ruin;' Mr. Shepherd continued to draw from the subject some scoff or growl at Mr. Pitt and the Excise; the laughing tailor told us a good story of some proud beggar; Mr. Clarke proposed that I should write a Greek inscription for a cenotaph which he was to erect in his garden to the memory of Burns; — and so passed away the solitary protestation on behalf of Burns's jacobinism, together with the wine and the roses, and the sea-breezes of that same Everton, in that same summer of 1801. Mr. Roscoe is dead, and has found time since then to be half forgotten; Dr. Currie, the physician, has been found 'unable to heal himself;' Mr. Shepherd of Gatacre is a name and a shadow; Mr. Clarke is a shadow without a name; the tailor, who set the table in a roar, is dust and ashes; and three men at the most remain of all who, in those convivial meetings, held it right to look down upon Burns as upon one whose spirit was rebellious overmuch against the institutions of man, and jacobinical in a sense which 'men of property' and master manufacturers will never brook, albeit democrats by profession.

So passed my novitiate as a literary aspirant, and in circles such as these. The next persons of eminence whom I saw were, with few exceptions, in the circles of London; and these were Sir Humphry Davy, Professor Wilson, Mr. Godwin, Mrs. Siddons, Lady Hamilton, Mrs. Hannah More and her sisters, Walking Stewart, Dr. Beddoes, Mr. Abernethy, Charles Lamb, Mr. Hazlitt, Dr. Parr, and others of whom I should say a passing word or two according to the circumstances, slight or ample, under which I saw them.

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CHAPTER II.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY — MR. GODWIN — MRS. GRANT.

Sir Humphry Davy, of all those whom I have just mentioned — nay, of all the eminent persons whom I have ever seen even by a casual glimpse — was the most agreeable to know on the terms of a slight acquaintance. What he might have proved upon a closer intimacy, I cannot say; not having had the honor of any such connection with him. My acquaintance had never gone far enough to pass the barrier of *strangership*, and the protection which lies in that consciousness, reciprocally felt; for, if friendship and confidential intimacy have the power to confer privileges, there are other privileges which they take away; and many times it is better to be privileged as the 'stranger' of a family than as its friend. Some I have known who, therefore, only called a man their friend, that they might have a license for taking liberties with him. Sir Humphry, I have no reason to believe, would have altered for the worse on a closer connection. But for myself I knew him only within ceremonious bounds; and I must say that nowhere, before or since, have I seen a man who had so felicitously caught the fascinating tone of high-bred urbanity which distinguishes the best part of the British nobility. The first time of my seeing him was at the *Courier* office, in a drawing-room then occupied by Mr. Coleridge, and as a guest of that

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gentleman: this must have been either in 1808 or 1809. Sir Humphry (I forget whether then a baronet, but I think not) had promised to drink tea with Mr. Coleridge, on his road to a meeting of the Royal Society; before which learned body he was on that evening to read some paper or other of his own composition. I had the honor to be invited as sole 'respondent' to the learned philosopher; sole supporter of the antistrophe in our choral performance. It sounded rather appalling to be engaged in a glee for three voices, with two performers such as these; and I trepidated a little as I went up stairs, having previously understood that the great man was already come. The door was thrown open by the servant who announced me; and I saw at once, in full proportions before me, the full-length figure of the young *savant*, not perhaps above ten years older than myself, whose name already filled all the post-horns of Europe, and levied homage from Napoleon. He was a little below the middle height; agreeable in his person, and amiable in the expression of his countenance. His dress was elaborately accurate and fashionable — no traces of soot or furnace *there;* it might be said, also, that it was youthful and almost gay in its character. But what chiefly distinguished him from other men, was the captivating — one might call it the *radiant* — courtesy of his manner. It was at once animated, and chastised by good-breeding; graceful, and, at the same time, gracious.

From a person so eminent it would not have been a sufficient encouragement that his manner should be, in a *passive* sense, courteous. This would have expressed only a consciousness of what was due to himself. But Sir Humphry's manner was conciliatory and intentionally winning. To a person as obscure as myself, it held out the flattering expressions of a wish to recommend himself, an assurance of interest in your person, and a desire

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both to know and to be known. In such expressions of feeling, when they are borne upon the very surface of the manners, and scattered like sunbeams indiscriminately upon all who fall within their range, doubtless there must be something of artifice and a polished hypocrisy. And nobody can more readily acknowledge than myself the integrity which lies at the bottom of our insular reserve and moroseness. Two sound qualities are at the root of these unpleasant phenomena — modesty or unpresumingness in the first place, and sincerity in the second. To be impudent was so much of the essence of profligacy in the ideas of the ancients, that the one became the most ordinary expression * for the other; and sincerity, again, or directness of purpose, is so much of the essence of conscientiousness, that we take *obliquity* or *crookedness* for one way of expounding dishonesty, or depravity of the moral sense — and, according to their natural tendencies, no doubt this is true. But such things admit of many modifications. Without absolute dissimulation, it is allowable and even laudable to reject, by a second or amended impulse, what the first involuntary impulse would have

* Viz., in the word *improbus*. But so defective are all dictionaries, that there is some difficulty in convincing scholars that the leading idea of *improbus*, its sole original idea, is — impudence, boldness, or audacity. Great is the incoherency and absurdity of learned men in questions of philology. Thus, Heyne, in a vain attempt to make out (*consistently* to make out) the well-known words, 'labor improbus omnia vincit,' says, that *improbus* means *pertinax*. How so? *Improbus* originally always has the meaning of *audacious*. Thus Pliny, speaking of the first catalogue of stars made by Hipparchus, calls it — 'labor itiam Deo improbus' — an enterprise audacious even for a superhuman being. Here is the very same word *labor* again qualified by the same epithet. And five hundred other cases might be adduced in which the sense of audacity, and that only, will unlock all, as by a master-key. Salmasius fancied (see his *De Pallio* of Tertullian) that the true idea was the *excessive* or *enormous* — whatever violated the common standards in any mode of disproportion.

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prompted; and to practise so much disguise as may withdraw from too open notice the natural play of human feelings. By what right does a man display to another, in his very look of alienation and repulsion at his first introduction, that he dislikes him, or that he is doubtful whether he shall like him? Yet this is the too general movement of British sincerity. The play of the feelings, the very flux and reflux of contending emotions, passes too nakedly, in the very act and process of introduction, under the eyes of the party interested. Frankness is good, honesty is good; but not a frankness, not an honesty which counteracts the very purposes of social meetings — for, unless he comes with the purpose of being pleased, why does a man come at all into meetings, not of business or necessity, but of relaxation and social pleasure?

From Sir H. Davy's conversation, which he carefully turned aside from his professional knowledge, nothing of importance was to be collected; he did not mean that there should. He meant to be a French talker — light, glancing, sparkling; and he was so. Upon this first occasion of my seeing him, I remember that he supported the peculiarly shallow hypothesis, that climate was the great operating cause in determining national differences of all kinds — in the arts as well as in civil institutions. Apparently he did this with *malice prepense*, as a means of exciting Mr. Coleridge to talk, by the provocation of shallowness. But he fought *imparibus armis* against Coleridge: the great boa constrictor could not be roused into unfolding his coils; the monster was lethargic on this evening, as if he had recently swallowed a herd of goats and their horns. The fact was, as I afterwards found, that Coleridge did not like the brilliant manipulator and lecturer. Coleridge thought him effeminate, and (like many others at that time) ridiculed his lecturing 'in white

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kid gloves,' and adapting his experiments — that is, his public experiments at the Royal Institution — to the shallow and trivial taste of mere amateurs, who happened to be in powerful stations. Still more, he complained of what he considered Davy's sycophancy and subservience to women of fashion and high rank. Coleridge assured me that Davy was much admired by various women of quality; and so enthusiastically by some, that they would exclaim audibly at the public lecture room — 'Oh, those eyes! those brilliant eyes!' and that the philosopher was weak enough to be pleased with this homage.

Worse even than this, in Coleridge's eyes, was Davy's behavior at fashionable dinner-tables, especially at Lord Darnley's, where the *élite* of the London *savans* and literati at that time congregated. Davy was charged, by many others as well as Coleridge, with too much forgetting the dignity of science in such society, and too openly laying himself out to win favor or applause. 'I could read in Lady Darnley's eyes,' said Coleridge one day, when reporting an instance of Davy's suppleness in accommodating himself to a very great man's theory of *aeroliths* — 'I could read plainly in Lady Darnley's eyes the very words — "I despise this man; this man is degrading himself wilfully."' However, it must be remembered that Sir H. Davy had a much larger and readier introduction into fashionable society than Coleridge. To profess any one intelligible art or accomplishment, and in this one to have attained an acknowledged or reputed pre-eminence, is a far better passport into privileged society than to have the largest intellectual pretensions of a less determinate class. The very narrowness of a man's claims, by making them definite and appreciable, is an advantage. Not merely a leader in a branch of art which presupposes a high sense of beauty, a cultivated taste,

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and other gifts properly intellectual, but even in some art presuming little beyond manual dexterity, is sure of his election into the exclusive circles. Not merely a painter, therefore, but a fiddler, provided only he be the first of his order — nay, I doubt not, a 'chin-chopper' or Jews'-harp player, if only he happen to exceed all other chin-choppers or Jew-harpists — will find himself a privileged man in comparison with the philosopher, or the very largest and amplest intellect that ever nature endowed or education expanded. The advantage lies in doing a thing which has a name, an assignable name; and the narrower is the art, the more appreciable are the degrees of merit in that art.

Now, it is the distinction, the being foremost, the place of *protagonist*, or Coryphœus in an art, which forms the ground of eligibility to that society which is *par excellence distingué*. An actor, therefore, beyond almost any other artist, except only the portrait painter, whose very craft is exercised in the society of its patrons, and cannot (unless partially) be otherwise exercised — an actor, I say, more easily than others, is admitted to graduate in such society, because his rank as an artist is more precisely ascertained by public reputation daily put to the test. Humiliating to any intellectual man, thinking haughtily of those pretensions, and standing upon no other title himself, is the collision which sometimes will befall him in aristocratic houses, with actors even of a low order: for in behalf of such actors, supposing them to have comic talents for drollery, is sometimes suspended the general rule which demands first-rate excellence; fourth or fifth-rate excellence on the stage being very compatible with superiority in convivial talents. Never shall I forget the wrath with which a London wit, who had indisputable powers of conversation, repeated the circumstances of a professional call,

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which he made, by appointment, (for he was a lawyer,) upon Y—ng, the tragic actor, who, in the absence of higher powers, then presided on the metropolitan stage: — 'Sir,' said he, 'in the room where I was left to cool my heels until the great man should find himself disengaged for a person so inconsiderable as myself, there were strewed upon a table, for scenic effect, cards of invitation to dinner parties of grandee lords by the dozen, and to the balls, routes, soirées, and heaven knows what all, of countesses, ambassadresses, and duchesses by the score — ay, and all falling within a few days; more than ever I shall have in my whole life.' Yet this man, who thus complained, was rather a brilliant 'diner-out,' as it is called.

Coleridge, as is notorious, whenever he happened to be in force, or even in artificial spirits, was even more than brilliant; to use a word too often abused and prostituted, he was even magnificent beyond all human standards; and a felicitous conversational specimen from him, was sometimes the most memorable chapter in a man's whole intellectual experience through life. Yet this Coleridge was not in request, was not sought after in the aristocratic circles of London — to their shame be it said! He had just such introductions — such and so many — as would, if turned to account by a pushing, worldly man, have slipped him on sufferance into many more houses of the same distinction. An invitation more or less, costs little to a woman of fashion; and he might have kept his ground, as many admitted *bores* do, upon toleration, in some two or three hundred great privileged mansions. Coleridge, however, had dignity of character sufficient to court no such distinctions; nor would his spirits have been equal to the expense of labor requisite in so enormous a capital, for a duty so widely dispersed. Neither do I overlook the fact that Mr. Coleridge's peculiar powers were not

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adapted to parties beyond the scale of a small dinner party. Yet still I contend, that, for the honor of literature, and for the sake of expressing a public homage to the most majestic forms in which the intellect of the age expresses itself, and by way of conciliating the grace and sanction of Scholarship and authentic Philosophy to the circles of rank and wealth, upon the same principle which leads those same circles to court the inferior sanction and grace of Art, even in its lowest walks — for all these reasons, Coleridge should have been courted and wooed into such society.

I am not apt to praise the continent at the expense of my own country; but here is an instance in which (generally speaking) the continental taste is better than ours. No great meeting is complete in Germany, in France, in Italy, unless the intellect of the land — its scholarship, its philosophy, its literature — be there by deputation: 'the table is not full,' unless these great leading interests are there represented. We inaugurate our wine cups by remembering the King's health; we inaugurate (let it not be thought profane to make such an allusion) our great civil transactions by prayer and remembrance of our highest relations: in reason, then, and by all analogy, we should inaugurate and legitimate, as it were, our meetings of festal pleasure, by the presence of intellectual power and intellectual grace, as the ultimate sources upon which we should all be glad to have it thought that our pleasures depend. Aristocracy of Britain! be not careless of the philosophy and intellect of the age, lest it be thought that your pursuits and taste exist in alienation from both. Dr. Johnson had talked himself into being so much talked of, that he — had he lived for another generation — would have become indispensable to fashionable parties. Coleridge, who, most

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assuredly, was far superior in creative power and fertility of new intuitions to Dr. Johnson, and immeasurably superior in the philosophic understanding, (for, in direct philosophic speculation, Dr. Johnson never even attempted anything, except in one little pamphlet against Soame Jenyns,) was scarcely beginning to be heard of amongst the higher circles of England when he died. The reason for comparing him with Dr. Johnson is on account of their common gifts of colloquial power.*

Did I not once hear a friend objecting to me such cases as those of Gibbon? — and, again, 'Wordsworth,' said he — 'him I met at the Marchioness of Salisbury's party, at Canning's, at the English Ambassador's in Paris, and so forth.' True; but Gibbon was a Member of Parliament, and in that capacity, not as a literary man, he had made his connections. Wordsworth, again, was introduced to the great world by Sir George Beaumont, a powerful friend; for he had a large fortune, having no children, and stood midway as a connecting link between the world of art and the world of fashion. Most cases are liable to some personal or casual explanation of this sort, where they seem to be exceptions to the general rule, that commanding intellect is not peculiarly welcome in the most aristocratic circles; or, at least, not in anything like that proportion in which art, nay, the lowest branches of the lowest arts, are welcome; for *these* are absolutely courted. Actors, for seventy or eighty years

* Three persons, in all, may be mentioned, from the ranks of intellectual people, who have had a footing in privileged society — I mean, not merely had an admission there, but a known and extensive acceptation. These three were — Lord Byron, Dr. Johnson, and Sir Walter Scott. Now, it is observable that the first was, in some sense, a denizen of such society in right of birth and rank; and, of both the others, it is remarkable that their passes were first countersigned by kings — Dr. Johnson's by George III., Sir Walter's by George IV.

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back at the least, have formed a constituent part of the British aristocratic circles.

Yet it is amusing on this subject to recall the contradictory complaints of different parties according to their different positions. Coleridge told me that Sir Humphry protested that a man had no chance for making himself a very distinguished person in the eyes of London society, unless he were a good House of Commons debater, (and that had a look of truth about it;) or, secondly, unless he had written a treatise on Greek lyric metres. 'Ah, if I could say something now that was pretty and showy on Choriambic metre, or on the *Versus Dochmiaci!*' This was his sneering form of expression. On the other hand, at that very time, Dr. Parr, who could have written ably on some parts of philology, and Middleton, a friend of Coleridge's, and soon after Bishop of Calcutta, who *could* have written Greek lyric metre itself, as well as *on* Greek metre — both were apt to complain of the undue usurpation of chemistry and the kindred researches, over the consecrated studies of our universities. The plain truth was, that great distinction in either way led to all sorts of public honor in England. Mathematics is the sole unprotected and unprivileged branch of knowledge — except what goes under the name of metaphysics, that being absolutely proscribed — not so much without privilege or reward, as without toleration.

Davy was not a favorite with Coleridge; and yet Coleridge, who grasped the whole philosophy of chemistry perhaps better than any man except Schelling, admired him, and praised him much; and often he went so far as to say that he might have been a great poet, which perhaps few people will be disposed to think, from the specimens he has left in the Bristol Anthology, (edited in 2 vols., about the year 1799 – 1800, by Mr.

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Southey.) But, however much he might admire this far-famed man, Coleridge did not at that time seem greatly to respect him. Once or twice he complained a little that Davy had been deficient in proper attentions to himself. In one of the cases alluded to, I suggested, which I believe really to have been the case, that Davy waited for Mr. Coleridge to make the first advances. But this Coleridge would not hear of. No, no, he said — Davy was the superior in social consideration — of *that* there could be no doubt — and to the superior belonged the initiatory act in any steps for proposing the relations on which they were to stand. I do not mean, however, that Coleridge had much, or perhaps any soreness on this point; for he was very forgiving in such cases. But he certainly looked with a disapproving eye on what he viewed at that time as suppleness and want of self-respect in Davy; and he also charged him with sensuality in eating.

I know not whence Coleridge had his information; but he sometimes commented with asperity on Davy's luxuriousness in this particular; and he repeated, as if he knew it on some better authority than that of rumor — what rumor, however, plentifully buzzed about at that time — that Davy would sometimes sit down in solitary epicureanism to dishes which cost him half a guinea each or more. Even if it were so, many epicureans there are, who would cry out, Is *that* all? And whatever faults might be found in Davy at that time, I have reason to believe that time and philosophy did much to raise and strengthen his character in after years; for as to foibles of physical temperament, a man must settle that account with his own conscience. For others, it is really impertinent to complain. And perhaps the great temperance which Mr. Coleridge, as well as myself, practised through

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life, may have been due to advantages of organic structure or in irritability of palate, as much as to philosophic self-command. At least for myself, I can say that, though very few men indeed have maintained so simple and almost Hindooish a diet, I do not take much merit to myself for my forbearance; and I extend the largest indulgence of charitable construction to all men — except young ones, whose gamut of pleasures is wider — for seeking that irritation from a moderate sensuality, which the flagging pulses of life no longer supply through other modes of excitement. Davy was then supposed to be making a fortune by some manufactory of gunpowder, from which he drew a large share of profit, not for capital contributed, or not for that originally, but for chemical secrets communicated. Soon afterwards, he married a widow with a very large income, (as much as £4000 a year by common report;) was made a baronet; was crowned with the laureateship of science, viz., the President's chair in the London Royal Society; withdrew in consequence from further lecturing in kid gloves of any color; drank moderately, as a man of elegant tastes, of the cup of human enjoyment; throve into a prosperous leader of a circle; sickened; travelled for health, unavailingly for himself, not altogether for others; died; and left a name which, from the necessity of things, must grow fainter in its impression under each revolving sun, but which, at one time, was by much the most resounding name — the most splendid in the estimate of the *laity*, if not of the *clerus* in science — which has arisen since the days of Newton.

Mr. Godwin, of whom the reader will perhaps wish to hear more than of Sir H. Davy, was one of those eminent persons whom, unfortunately, I saw less of than perhaps any other lion of the times. He was in person a little

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man, with manners peculiarly tranquil, philosophic, and dignified — so at least I thought. I was greatly interested in all that related to this gentleman ; not so much, not at all indeed for his novels — which I do not profess to admire : and I am of opinion that, if Mr. Godwin himself had been asked the question searchingly, he would have acknowledged that I had seen a little into his constitution of mind, when I pronounce that of all men who can ever have lived, he, by preference, must have found the labor most irksome of creating incidents, and making the narrative continue to move. Cocytus is not so stagnant or so sluggish in motion as the 'Caleb Williams' in parts, and a later novel, whose name I forget, (but turning upon the case of kidnapping an heir to an English estate, and carrying him to the Continent;) and I would have consented to abide by an appeal to Mr. Godwin himself, whether, to the last extremity of a soil parched up and arid, he had not felt the condition of his own mind when summoned to produce incidents. Is there anything disgraceful in this dearth of incident — this palsy of the fable-creating * faculty ? Far from it; *so* far from it, that the powerful minds I have happened to know were certainly those who had least of it. The most powerful mind I have ever known had none of it — positively none. Shakspeare, whom few men would disagree in making FIRST of human intellects, though double difficulties would arise as to who should be SECOND, and threefold difficulties as to who should be THIRD, and fourfold as to who should be FOURTH: well, Shakspeare had, perhaps, as

* But I here take an opportunity of observing, that, to produce a fable, (*i. e.*, the outline or frame-work of a *nexus* of incidents,) is not very difficult; the true difficulty is in making the fable move — in calling up the secondary incidents, through which and by which this fable is to revolve.

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little of this power as most men, who have had (like him) something of universal minds. Not, therefore, by any possibility, can it be supposed that I mean to disparage Mr. Godwin in charging him with this defect. And yet, in a newspaper, some months ago, I saw the novel of 'Caleb Williams' called '*magnificent*' — a word which, as I have remarked elsewhere, is more than any other abused, from the hotbed excitement of the age; and, previously, by some years, I saw a paper which, in other circumstances, might have moved laughter — a paper which compared and equalized Mr. Godwin, as a novelist, with Sir Walter Scott: but which, because I fancied that I saw in it the filial hand of a gifted writer, whom the whole world, from the east to the west, admires, was fitted, by its very extravagance, to draw tears on account of its piety. Involuntarily I thought of a paper which a German wife had written about her ugly husband, (Herder,) whom all others had admired, but whom she only thought proper to find handsome. But enough of what Mr. Godwin was *not*. I felt the nearest interest in this famous man on three separate accounts: *first*, as the husband of Mrs. Wolstonecraft. — What a woman! the sole rival in this country of the noblest of her sex, Madame Roland — the rival, I mean, in constitution of mind: would that she had glorified her life and end by the same self-sacrifices, which, under favoring circumstances, she was equally able to have done! — Next, I felt a profound interest in Mr. Godwin, as the great *mormo* set up to terrify all England, some forty years ago, by two separate classes of enemies — by the '*panic-of-property* men,' as Coleridge christened the party who rose in England under the terrors of the French 'war against the palace — peace to the cottage;' and, secondly, by the antagonists of what was then called *French Philosophy*,

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or *Modern philosophy;* or the philosophy of the *Illuminati.*

In two works of great circulation at that time, 'Pilgrim Good Intent,' and Miss Hamilton's novel, 'Modern Philosophers,' the two great moving agents are Dr. Priestley and Mr. Godwin. His connection with Mrs. Wolstonecraft had completed what the first or 4to edition of his 'Political Justice' had begun: the first edition, I say; for, in the second, the hypothesis which alarmed the 'men of property,' (as Mr. Hood has it,) had been emasculated. Such was the awe inspired at that time by these shocks to public opinion, that most people felt of Mr. Godwin with the same alienation and horror as of a goul, or a bloodless vampyre, or the monster created by Frankenstein. It may be supposed that I had not shared in these thoughtless impressions; and yet, from the audacity of his speculations, I looked to see a loud, clamorous, and, perhaps, self-sufficient dogmatist; whereas, the qualities most apparent on the surface of his manners were a gentle dignity of self-restraint and a tranquil benignity. I saw him, however, always under a cloud — that is, under the dust and confusion, to the intellect, of a large party, composed of what (by analogy to its slang use) might be termed a mob of literary *swells.* Once only I saw him in a smaller party, at the *Courier* Office — present, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Charles Lamb, Mr. Stewart, a proprietor of the *Courier*, and some four or five others. But, on this occasion, it happened, which, perhaps, had not often happened before, that neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth talked; Coleridge being more than usually out of spirits; Wordsworth fatigued by attending a dull debate in the House of Commons; Southey naturally indisposed to the exertions connected with colloquial duties; myself and others repressed by youth and reverence for our company.

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Thus it fell by accident to Charles Lamb to entertain the company, which he did in his happiest style, as a Diogenes with the heart of a St. John; but nothing, as it happened, arose to call out the powers of Mr. Godwin. Though balked, therefore, of all fair occasion for measuring his colloquial calibre, I was not sorry to have gone off with an amended impression of the demeanor and general bearing to be naturally expected from revolutionary minds, and a personal redress given to the common partisan portrait circulated of one who had filled the mouth of declaimers for many a year, and become a by-word or a commonplace of rhetoric for the schools.

In 1808, going up to London from Oxford, about May or June, in order to attend the marriage of a college friend, I met a lady of great conversational spirit — a Scottish lady, who, with her daughter, were the lions for that particular season in the higher circles of London; the mother for her wit, the daughter for her beauty. This was Mrs. Grant, of Laggan — a valley or parish in the Scottish Highlands. The interest about her had been evoked for this particular winter of London by the quality of her introductions, and stimulated by the beauty of the daughter. But the permanent ground of it lay in her books; which, however, were thought below her conversation. Her visit was chiefly to the Bishop of London, whose palace she had just left at the time I met her, in order to fulfil some engagement to a city friend — the wife of a rich stockbroker; and there it was I had the honor of being presented to her. Her kindness to me was particularly flattering; and, to this day, I retain the impression of the benignity which she — an established wit, and just then receiving incense from all quarters — showed in her manners to me — a person utterly unknown. Once, however, she gave a rough assault to my deepest

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sensibilities. Either from myself or from somebody else, she had learned my profound veneration for the poetry of Wordsworth. Upon this, she suddenly put a question to me upon the lines of Wordsworth, on seeing a robin red-breast pursuing a butterfly. The particular passage which she selected was to this effect: —

> 'If Father Adam could open his eyes,
> And see but this sight beneath the skies,
> He would wish to close them again.'

'Now,' said Mrs. Grant, 'what possible relation can Father Adam have to this case of the bird and the butterfly?' It must be mentioned here, that the poem was not in the 'Lyrical Ballads,' by which originally Wordsworth had become known, but in a second collection which had but just issued from the press. The volumes had been in the public hands, if they could be said to have reached the public at all in those years, for about a fortnight; but in mine, who had only recently arrived in London, not above two days. Consequently, I had not seen the poem; and being quite taken aback by such a question, in a dinner party made up of people who had either not heard of Wordsworth, or heard of him only as an extravagant and feeble innovator, I believe that I made some absurd answer about Adam being possibly taken as a representative man, or representing the general sensibilities of human nature. Anything passes in company for a reason or an explanation, when people have not the demoniac passion for disputation; and Mrs. Grant accordingly bowed, in sign of acquiescence. I easily judged, however, that she could not have been satisfied; and in going home, with a strong feeling of self-reproach for having but ill sustained a poetic reputation for which I was so intensely jealous, I set myself to consider what *could*

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be the meaning for this connection of Father Adam with the case; and, without having read the poem, by the light of so much as Mrs. Grant had quoted, instantly it flashed upon me that the secret reference must be to that passage in the 'Paradise Lost,' where Adam is represented — on the very next morning after his fatal transgression, and whilst yet in suspense as to the shape in which the dread consequences would begin to reveal themselves, and how soon begin — as lifting up his eyes, and seeing the first sad proof that all flesh was tainted, and that corruption had already travelled, by mysterious sympathy, through universal nature. The passage is most memorable, and can never be forgotten by one who has thoughtfully read it: —

> 'The bird of Jove stoop'd from his airy flight,
> Two birds of gayest plume before him drove;
> Down from the hills, the beast that reigns in woods —
> First hunter then — pursued a gentle brace,
> Goodliest of all the forest — hart and hind.
> *Adam observed*' ——

Here, then, we find, that in Milton's representation of the Fall, the very earliest — not the second or third, but positively the very first — outward signs by which Adam was made aware of a secret but awful revolution, which had gone like a whisper through all nature, was this very phenomenon of two animals pursuing in wrath others of more innocent and beautiful appearance. Reasonably, therefore, we may imagine, for the purposes of a poet, that if Adam were permitted to open his eyes again upon this earthly scene of things, it would send a peculiar anguish through his thoughts to see renewed before him that very same image and manifestation of ruin by which his eyes had been met and his suspense had been resolved on the very first morning succeeding to his fall. The

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only question which could arise after this upon the propriety of Mr. Wordsworth's allusion, was, Had he a right to presume in his readers such a knowledge of Milton? The answer to which is — that Milton is as much a presumable or presupposable book in the reference of a poet, as nature herself and the common phenomena of nature. These a poet postulates, or presupposes in his reader, and is entitled to do so. However, I mentioned the case afterwards to Mr. Wordsworth; and, in consequence of what I then said, he added the note of reference to Milton, which will be found in the subsequent editions. Another, and hardly, perhaps, so excusable a mistake, had been made upon the very same poem by *The Edinburgh Review*. Mr. Wordsworth had noticed the household character of the red-breast and his consecration to the feelings of men, in all Christian countries; and this he had expressed by calling it

> 'The bird, whom by some name or other,
> All men who know thee *call their brother*' —

which passage the Reviewer had so little understood as to direct attention to it by italics. Yet the explanation was found in what immediately followed: —

> 'Their Thomas in Finland
> And Russia far inland;
> The Peter of Norway boors.'

The bird is Robin with us in Britain, Thomas in another land, Peter in another, and so on. This was the explanation of what the Reviewer thought so absurd or inexplicable. To call a bird by a Christian name *is*, in effect, when expressed by a poet, to 'call him a brother' of man. And with equal ease might all the passages be explained which have hitherto been stumbling-blocks to critics, where

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at least the objection has arisen out of misconstruction of the sense.

Some years after this, I saw Mrs. Grant again in Edinburgh; but grief was then heavy upon her: the fair-haired young lady, the 'Scottish Beauty' of the London circles in 1808, had gone to an early grave; and others of her family were expected to follow. Her 'Letters from the Mountains' made a considerable impression at the time of its first appearance. But the work which interested me the most was that in which she painted her own early years as passed among the Anglo-Dutch of the New England States. It was a condition of society which had thus much of a paradisiacal condition — that none was 'afore or after the other;' no jealous precedencies; no suspicions; no spectacles of grinding poverty. Aristocracy, there was none; pauperism, there was none; and every member of the community saw a friend and a well-wisher in every other. Happy, happy state, in which were to be found

'No fears to beat away, no strife to heal.'

a state which, with the expansion of civilization as it travels through American forests, may, for a century to come, be continually renewed in those lands, but elsewhere I fear never more in this world.

I have been anticipating a little, and looking forward into years which I have not yet regularly reached. It may surprise a reader who has gone through the slight records of my life, to find me originally as a boy, moving amongst the circles of the nobility, and now courting only those of intellectual people. The final resolution which led me into renouncing my connections with ranks above my own, arose upon the following occasion. On leaving

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school clandestinely, which I did some weeks before my seventeenth birthday, I went into Wales; where I continued for months to walk about. As long as I kept up any negotiation with my guardians, I received a regular allowance of a guinea a week. But, upon this sum, not, however, (as may be supposed,) without great difficulty, I continued to obtain a bed, and some apology for supper, in the shape of coffee or tea, at the inns scattered about the Welsh valleys for the sake of the tourist. The old village inns had, till lately, charged the most primitive prices — sixpence, for example, had been the usual rate for a dinner, and so on; but all this had very nearly disappeared under the great revolution of the times. War prices had arisen in the great markets; a great influx of tourists and artists had begun to set in to the Welsh valleys; elegant hotels arose on every side; and the prices were pretty much as on the Bath road. Finding, therefore, that my three shillings a day did but little at these showy inns, more than the better half being at once exhausted upon a bed and the perquisites to 'waiter,' 'chambermaid,' and 'boots,' I came to the resolution of carrying a tent with me and sleeping out of doors. This tent, as may be imagined, was miserably small; both to make it more portable, and also on account of the tent-pole, which, to avoid notice and trouble, was no more than a common walking-cane. I pitched my tent always on the lee-side of a hill; and, in a land so solitary, and free from 'high-viced' towns, I apprehended but little from any enemies, except the wild mountain cattle: these sometimes used to take umbrage at my intrusion, and advance upon my encampment in the darkness, with what intentions I could not discover, nor perhaps did they know; but I lay in constant anxiety that some lumbering cow or other should break into my preserve, and poach

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her heavy foot into my face. This, however, was not the worst evil. I soon found the truth of Napoleon's criticism at St. Helena, on a proposal made for improving the art of war, by portable tents, treble-barrelled guns, &c. — that the practice of *bivouacking*, which offended so deeply the humanity of some philanthropic people, was in fact most favorable to the health of troops; and that at most, a screen hung up to windward was the utmost protection from open air, (or properly from the weather, rather than the air,) which is consistent with health. The loftier tents of the officers may be an exception; but mine, which resembled more the humbler and crowded tents of the privates, confirmed strikingly the medical objection of Napoleon. I soon found it necessary to resign it in that form; using it rather as a screen against wind, or, on a calm night, as a pillow. Selecting the ground well on such occasions, I found the advantage of this *sub dio* sleeping, in improved health; but summer air and dry ground disappearing, I was at length obliged to seek other modes of lodging.

One morning, however, during the season when I practised it, I was sitting as yet undecided upon my day's movements, when a sound of wheels, as if rapidly approaching my own station, became audible. I rose and went forwards in the direction of the sound, with as much surprise as if 'Gabriel's hounds' had been really approaching; for my idea was, that I had taken up my sleeping quarters on a wild moor remote from roads. A little ascent, and the turning of a knoll, showed me that in part I was right: a wild moor it was, but one which was traversed by the high road between Kerniogge and Llanrwst. A travelling carriage was advancing, and swept past me at the very moment when I touched the high road. The carriage seemed known to me; and on

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the pannels I observed the coronet of a marquis; and, immediately after, I saw a head put out of the window, and looking at me until the downhill track and abrupt turns of the road hid me from sight. It was a natural conclusion enough, this being the high road to Holyhead, that the carriage I had just seen might be that of my Irish friend, who had been created a marquis soon after I left Ireland; and the face of the person who surveyed me so keenly, doubtless one of his household, knowing me better than I knew her. Great was my joy at this probability; and, without delay, I struck my tent and walked to Llanrwst. The distance proved to be six miles; and on my arrival the bird was flown. I went into the stable-yard, and inquired earnestly of a group just fresh from attending to the horses recently come in—'Who was the last traveller?' All remembered that it was a lord, and that it was a marquis. 'Was it the Marquis of S——?' 'Yes: that was the very title,' several voices answered; 'and he would stop for dinner at Conway.' Thither I resolved to pursue; and, for that purpose, went into the house. Luckily, the landlord was able to inform me that the noble marquis was not my friend, but Lord Bath. And, by this timely information, I was saved from the very awkward embarrassment of finding myself at Conway with a chaise and four to pay, and no money at my command. The momentary evil was past. But the sort of danger I had escaped, of finding myself viewed by the inn at Conway as a fraudulent tourist, threw me powerfully on considering what had been my motive for pursuing the party, supposing even that it *had* been Lord S——. What would have come of it? He would naturally have been pleased to see me, as everybody is pleased to see old friends after a long interval; he would have asked me to dine with him; and, supposing

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a vacant seat in his carriage, he would asked me to go along with him to Holyhead or Dublin. But even so, he would not have particularly admired my call on his purse for a chaise and four. Next I went on to ask myself — What if all this were conceded, and it should happen that he really *was* pleased, and wishing for my company to Dublin — upon what principles or views did I mean to cultivate a connection of this sort? Boyish years stood upon other grounds; but, on coming to an accountable age, I knew that everywhere sprung up an impertinent question as to a young man's future destination. Up to sixteen or fifteen, a boy is ranked upon the footing of his father's rank. After that time, his rank is deduced *proleptically* from the probable stations which he will hold in future times.

Now, if my object was to make myself a trading Member of Parliament, certainly the connections which I had with ministerial noblemen would be of use. Through them, a borough might be had; and, that obtained, all was done for a man which he could owe to fortune — the rest depended upon himself. But, supposing that *personally* there should be no objections, still I had seen enough of borough-disposers to know that they were not willing to give, without a consideration, something more than that of support to a particular line of politics. Lord S—— in particular, who in those days had some borough interest, looked upon it as 'bespoke' for family connections. And so of others. But the most signal bar to all this was, my own grievous disinclination to any mode of public, or noisy, or contentious life. Peace, liberty to think, solitude — these were the cravings of my heart. And unless I went among the nobility in the character of a demanding, insolent claimant, I knew that I had better not go at all. Inevitably the question arises — Upon what

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footing is this man here? Is it his natural station? No: then at least he is an interloper; and the chances are, that he is a toad-eater and sycophant. Suppose he is *not* — yet the known presumption that he is (a presumption of which he cannot be unaware) loads him with almost the worst reproaches of the reality. He is no sycophant; yet he is willing to stand the presumption that he is, and the consequent contempt —— For what? Every way, I saw that my own dignity, which above all things a man should scrupulously maintain, required that I should no longer go into any circles where I did not stand on my own native footing — *proprio jure*. Many a time had I wondered at the false conceptions of dignity which could lead Addison to think himself elevated by marriage with Lady Warwick — a husband to seek protection, as it were, from a wife! What had been abundantly right for me as a boy, ceased to be right for me when I ceased to be a boy.

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CHAPTER III.

RECOLLECTIONS OF CHARLES LAMB.

AMONGST the earliest literary acquaintances I made was that with the inimitable Charles Lamb: inimitable, I say, but that word is too limited in its meaning; for, as is said of Milton in that well known life of him attached to all common editions of the 'Paradise Lost,' (Fenton's, I think,) 'in both senses he was above imitation.' Yes; it was as impossible to the moral nature of Charles Lamb that he should imitate another, as, in an intellectual sense, it was impossible that any other should successfully imitate him. To write with patience even, not to say genially, for Charles Lamb it was a very necessity of his constitution that he should write from his own wayward nature; and that nature was so peculiar that no other man, the ablest at mimicry, could counterfeit its voice. But, let me not anticipate; for these were opinions about Lamb which I had not when I first knew him, nor could have had by any reasonable title. 'Elia,' be it observed, the exquisite 'Elia,' was then unborn; Lamb had as yet published nothing to the world which proclaimed him in his proper character of a most original man of genius;*

* '*Man of genius*' — '*man of talent.*' I have, in another place, laid down what I conceive to be the true ground of distinction between *genius* and *talent*; which lies mainly in this — that genius is intellectual power impregnated with the *moral* nature, and expresses a synthesis of

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at best, he could have been thought no more than a man of talent — and of talent moving in a narrow path, with a power rather of mimicking the quaint and the fantastic, than any large grasp over catholic beauty. And, therefore, it need not offend the most doting admirer of Lamb as he is *now* known to us, a brilliant star for ever fixed in the firmament of English literature, that I acknowledge myself to have sought his acquaintance rather under the reflex honor he had enjoyed of being known as Coleridge's friend, than for any which he yet held directly and separately in his own person. My earliest advances towards this acquaintance had an inauspicious aspect; and it may be worth while reporting the circumstances, for they were characteristic of Charles Lamb; and the immediate result was — that we parted, not perhaps (as Lamb says of his philosophic friend R. and the Parisians) 'with mutual contempt,' but at least with coolness; and on my part, with something that might have even turned to disgust — founded, however, entirely on my utter misapprehension of Lamb's character and his manners — had it not been for the winning goodness of Miss Lamb, before which all resentment must have melted in a moment.

It was either late in 1804 or early in 1805, according

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the active in man with his original organic capacity of pleasure and pain. Hence the very word *genius*, because the *genial* nature in its whole organization is expressed and involved in it. Hence, also, arises the reason that genius is always peculiar and individual; one man's genius never exactly repeats another man's. But talent is the same in all men; and that which is effected by talent, can never serve to identify or indicate its author. Hence, too, that, although talent is the object of respect, it never conciliates love; you love a man of talent perhaps *in concreto*, but not talent; whereas genius, even for itself, is idolized. I am the more proud of this distinction, since I have seen the utter failure of Mr. Coleridge, judging from his attempt in his 'Table-Talk.'

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to my present computations, that I had obtained from a literary friend a letter of introduction to Mr. Lamb. All that I knew of his works was his play of 'John Woodvil,' which I had bought in Oxford, and perhaps I only had bought throughout that great University, at the time of my matriculation there, about the Christmas of 1803. Another book fell into my hands on that same morning, I recollect — the 'Gebir' of Mr. Walter Savage Landor — which astonished me by the splendor of its descriptions (for I had opened accidentally upon the sea-nymph's marriage with Tamor, the youthful brother of Gebir) — and I bought this also. Afterwards, when placing these two most unpopular of books on the same shelf with the other far holier idols of my heart, the joint poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge as then associated in the 'Lyrical Ballads' — poems not equally unknown, perhaps a *little* better known, but only with the result of being more openly scorned, rejected — I could not but smile internally at the fair prospect I had of congregating a library which no man had read but myself. 'John Woodvil' I had almost studied, and Miss Lamb's pretty 'High-Born Helen,' and the ingenious imitations of Burton; these I had read, and, to a certain degree, must have admired, for some parts of them had settled without effort in my memory. I had read also the *Edinburgh* notice of them; and with what contempt may be supposed from the fact, that my veneration for Wordsworth transcended all that I felt for any created being, past or present; insomuch that, in the summer, or spring rather, of that same year, and full eight months before I first went to Oxford, I had ventured to address a letter to him, through his publishers, the Messrs. Longman, (which letter, Miss Wordsworth in after years assured me they believed to be the production of some person much older than I represented myself,)

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and that in due time I had been honored by a long answer from Wordsworth; an honor which, I well remember, kept me awake, from mere excess of pleasure, through a long night in June, 1803. It was not to be supposed that the very feeblest of admirations could be shaken by mere scorn and contumely, unsupported by any shadow of a reason. Wordsworth, therefore, could not have suffered in any man's opinion, from the puny efforts of this new autocrat amongst reviews; but what was said of Lamb, though not containing one iota of criticism, either good or bad, had certainly more point and cleverness. The supposition that 'John Woodvil' might be a lost drama, recovered from the age of Thespis, and entitled to the hircus, &c., must, I should think, have won a smile from Lamb himself; or why say 'Lamb himself,' which means '*even* Lamb,' when he would have been the *very* first to laugh, (as he was afterwards among the first to hoot at his own farce,) provided only he could detach his mind from the ill-nature and hard contempt which accompanied the wit. This wit had certainly not dazzled my eyes in the slightest degree. So far as I was left at leisure, by a more potent order of poetry, to think of the 'John Woodvil' at all, I had felt and acknowledged a delicacy and tenderness in the situations as well as the sentiments, but disfigured, as I thought, by quaint, grotesque, and *mimetic* phraseology. The main defect, however, of which I complained, was defect of power. I thought Lamb had no right to take his station amongst the inspired writers who had just then risen, to throw new blood into our literature, and to breathe a breath of life through the worn-out, or, at least, torpid organization of the national mind. He belonged, I thought, to the old literature; and, as a poet, he certainly does. There were in his verses minute scintillations of genius — now and

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then, even a subtle sense of beauty; and there were shy graces, lurking half-unseen, like violets in the shade. But there was no power on a colossal scale; no breadth; no choice of great subjects; no wrestling with difficulty; no creative energy. So I thought then; and so I should think now, if Lamb were viewed chiefly as a poet. Since those days, he has established his right to a seat in any company. But why? and in what character? As 'Elia:'—the essays of 'Elia' are as exquisite a gem amongst the jewellery of literature, as any nation can show. They do not, indeed, suggest to the typifying imagination, a Last Supper of Da Vinci, or a Group from the Sistine Chapel; but they suggest some exquisite cabinet painting; such, for instance, as that Carlo Dolce known to all who have visited Lord Exeter's place of Burleigh; (by the way, I bar the allusion to *Charles* Lamb, which a shameless punster suggests in the name *Carlo Dolce;*) and in this also resembling that famous picture—that many critics (Hazlitt amongst others) can see little or nothing in it. *Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum!* Those, therefore, err in my opinion, who present Lamb to our notice amongst the poets. Very pretty, very elegant, very tender, very beautiful verses he has written; nay, twice he has written verses of extraordinary force, almost demoniac force—viz., 'The Three Graves,' and 'The Gipsy's Malison.' But, speaking generally, he writes verses as one to whom that function was a secondary and occasional function; not his original and natural vocation; not an ἐργον, but a πάρεργον.

For the reasons, therefore, I have given, never thinking of Charles Lamb as a poet, and, at that time, having no means for judging of him in any other character, I had requested the letter of introduction to him, rather with a view to some further knowledge of Coleridge, (who was

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then absent from England,) than from any special interest about Lamb himself. However, I felt the extreme discourtesy of approaching a man, and asking for his time and civility under such an avowal: and the letter, therefore, as I believe, or as I requested, represented me in the light of an admirer. I hope it did; for that character might have some excuse for what followed, and heal the unpleasant impression likely to be left by a sort of *fracas* which occurred at my first meeting with Lamb. This was so characteristic of Lamb, that I have often laughed at it since I came to know what *was* characteristic of Lamb. But first let me describe my brief introductory call upon him at the India House. I had been told that he was never to be found at home except in the evenings; and to have called then would have been, in a manner, forcing myself upon his hospitalities, and at a moment when he might have confidential friends about him; besides that, he was sometimes tempted away to the theatres. I went, therefore, to the India House; made inquiries amongst the servants; and, after some trouble, (for *that* was early in his Leadenhall Street career, and, possibly, he was not much known,) I was shown into a small room, or else a small section of a large one, (thirty-four years affects one's remembrance of some circumstances,) in which was a very lofty writing-desk, separated by a still higher railing from that part of the floor on which the profane — the laity, like myself — were allowed to approach the *clerus*, or clerkly rulers of the room. Within the railing, sat, to the best of my remembrance, six quill-driving gentlemen; not gentlemen whose duty or profession it was merely to drive the quill, but who were then driving it — *gens de plume*, such *in esse*, as well as *in posse* — in act as well as habit; for, as if they supposed me a spy, sent by some superior power, to

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report upon the situation of affairs as surprised by me, they were all too profoundly immersed in their oriental studies to have any sense of my presence. Consequently, I was reduced to a necessity of announcing myself and my errand. I walked, therefore, into one of the two open doorways of the railing, and stood closely by the high stool of him who occupied the first place within the little aisle. I touched his arm, by way of recalling him from his lofty Leadenhall speculations to this sublunary world; and, presenting my letter, asked if that gentleman (pointing to the address) were really a citizen of the present room; for I had been repeatedly misled, by the directions given me, into wrong rooms. The gentleman smiled; it was a smile not to be forgotten. This was Lamb. And here occurred a *very*, *very* little incident — one of those which pass so fugitively that they are gone and hurrying away into Lethe almost before your attention can have arrested them; but it was an incident which, to me, who happened to notice it, served to express the courtesy and delicate consideration of Lamb's manners. The seat upon which he sat, was a very high one; so absurdly high, by the way, that I can imagine no possible use or sense in such an altitude, unless it were to restrain the occupant from playing truant at the fire, by opposing Alpine difficulties to his descent.

Whatever might be the original purpose of this aspiring seat, one serious dilemma arose from it, and this it was which gave the occasion to Lamb's act of courtesy. Somewhere there is an anecdote, meant to illustrate the ultra-obsequiousness of the man: either I have heard of it in connection with some actual man known to myself, or it is told in a book of some historical coxcomb — that, being on horseback, and meeting some person or other whom it seemed advisable to flatter, he actually dis-

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mounted, in order to pay his court by a more ceremonious bow. In Russia, as we all know, this was, at one time, upon meeting any of the Imperial family, an act of legal necessity: and there, accordingly, but there only, it would have worn no ludicrous aspect. Now, in this situation of Lamb's, the act of descending from his throne, a very elaborate process, with steps and stages analogous to those on horseback — of slipping your right foot out of the stirrup, throwing your leg over the crupper, &c. — was, to all intents and purposes, the same thing as dismounting from a great elephant of a horse. Therefore it both was, and was felt to be by Lamb, supremely ludicrous. On the other hand, to have sate still and stately upon this aerial station, to have bowed condescendingly from this altitude, would have been — not ludicrous indeed; performed by a very superb person, and supported by a very superb bow, it might have been vastly fine, and even terrifying to many young gentlemen under sixteen: but it would have had an air of ungentlemanly assumption. Between these extremes, therefore, Lamb had to choose: between appearing ridiculous himself for a moment, by going through a ridiculous evolution, which no man could execute with grace; or, on the other hand, appearing lofty and assuming, in a degree which his truly humble nature (for he was the humblest of men in the pretensions which he put forward for himself) must have shrunk from with horror. Nobody who knew Lamb can doubt how the problem was solved: he began to dismount instantly; and, as it happened that the very first *round* of his descent obliged him to turn his back upon me as if for a sudden purpose of flight, he had an excuse for laughing; which he did heartily — saying, at the same time, something to this effect, that I must not judge from first appearances; that he should revolve upon

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me; that he was not going to fly; and other facetiæ, which challenged a general laugh from the clerical brotherhood.

When he had reached the basis of terra firma on which I was standing, naturally, as a mode of thanking him for his courtesy, I presented my hand; which, in a general case, I should certainly not have done; for I cherished, in an ultra-English degree, the English custom (a wise custom) of bowing in frigid silence on a first introduction to a stranger; but, to a man of literary talent, and one who had just practised so much kindness in my favor at so probable a hazard to himself of being laughed at for his pains, I could not maintain that frosty reserve. Lamb took my hand; did not absolutely reject it: but rather repelled my advance by his manner. This, however, long afterwards I found, was only a habit derived from his too great sensitiveness to the variety of people's feelings, which run through a gamut so infinite of degrees and modes as to make it unsafe for any man who respects himself, to be too hasty in his allowances of familiarity. Lamb had, as he was entitled to have, a high self-respect; and me he probably suspected (as a young Oxonian) of some aristocratic tendencies. The letter of introduction, containing (I imagine) no matters of business, was speedily run through; and I instantly received an invitation to spend the evening with him. Lamb was not one of those who catch at the chance of escaping from a bore by fixing some distant day, when accidents (in duplicate proportion, perhaps, to the number of intervening days) may have carried you away from the place: he sought to benefit by no luck of that kind; for he was, with his limited income — and I say it deliberately — positively the most hospitable man I have known in this world. That night, the same night, I was to come and spend the

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evening with him. I had gone to the India House with the express purpose of accepting whatever invitation he should give me; and, therefore, I accepted this, took my leave, and left Lamb in the act of resuming his aerial position.

I was to come so early as to drink tea with Lamb; and the hour was seven. He lived in the Temple; and I, who was not then, as afterwards I became, a student and member of 'the Honorable Society of the Middle Temple,' did not know much of the localities. However, I found out his abode, not greatly beyond my time: nobody had been asked to meet me, which a little surprised me, but I was glad of it; for, besides Lamb, there was present, his sister, Miss Lamb, of whom, and whose talents and sweetness of disposition, I had heard. I turned the conversation, upon the first opening which offered, to the subject of Coleridge; and many of my questions were answered satisfactorily, because seriously, by Miss Lamb. But Lamb took a pleasure in baffling me, or in throwing ridicule upon the subject. Out of this grew the matter of our affray. We were speaking of 'The Ancient Mariner.' Now, to explain what followed, and a little to excuse myself, I must beg the reader to understand that I was under twenty years of age, and that my admiration for Coleridge (as in, perhaps, a still greater degree, for Wordsworth) was literally in no respect short of a religious feeling: it had, indeed, all the sanctity of religion, and all the tenderness of a human veneration. Then, also, to imagine the strength which it would derive from circumstances that do not exist now, but did then, let the reader further suppose a case — not such as he may have known since that era about Sir Walter Scotts and Lord Byrons, where every man you could possibly fall foul of, early or late, night or

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day, summer or winter, was in perfect readiness to feel and express his sympathy with the admirer — but when no man, beyond one or two in each ten thousand, had so much as heard of either Coleridge or Wordsworth; and that one, or those two, knew them only to scorn them — trample on them — spit upon them: men so abject in public estimation, I maintain, as that Coleridge and that Wordsworth, had not existed before — have not existed since — will not exist again. We have heard, in old times, of donkeys insulting effete or dying lions, by kicking them; but, in the case of Coleridge and Wordsworth, it was effete donkeys that kicked living lions. They, Coleridge and Wordsworth, were the Pariahs of literature in those days: as much scorned wherever they were known; but escaping that scorn only because they were as little known as Pariahs, and even more obscure.

Well, after this bravura, by way of conveying my sense of the real position then occupied by these two authors — a position which thirty and odd years have altered, by a revolution more astonishing and total than ever before happened in literature or in life — let the reader figure to himself the sensitive horror with which a young person, carrying his devotion about with him, of necessity, as the profoundest of secrets, like a primitive Christian amongst a nation of Pagans, or a Roman Catholic convert amongst the bloody idolaters of Japan — in Oxford, above all places, hoping for no sympathy, and feeling a daily grief, almost a shame, in harboring this devotion to that which, nevertheless, had done more for the expansion and sustenance of his own inner mind than all literature besides — let the reader figure, I say, to himself, the shock with which such a person must recoil from hearing the very friend and associate of these authors utter what seemed at that time a burning ridicule

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of all which belonged to them — their books, their thoughts, their places, their persons. This had gone on for some time, before we came upon the ground of 'The Ancient Mariner:' I had been grieved, perplexed, astonished; and how else could I have felt reasonably, knowing nothing of Lamb's propensity to mystify a stranger; he, on the other hand, knowing nothing of the depth of my feelings on these subjects, and that they were not so much mere literary preferences as something that went deeper than life or household affections? At length, when he had given utterance to some ferocious canon of judgment, which seemed to question the entire value of the poem, I said, perspiring, (I dare say,) in this detestable crisis — 'But, Mr. Lamb, good heavens! how is it possible you can allow yourself in such opinions? What instance could you bring from the poem that would bear you out in these insinuations?' 'Instances!' said Lamb: 'oh, I'll instance you, if you come to that. Instance, indeed! Pray, what do you say to this —

> "The many men so beautiful,
> And they all dead did lie?"

So beautiful indeed! Beautiful! Just think of such a gang of Wapping vagabonds, all covered with pitch, and chewing tobacco; and the old gentleman himself — what do you call him? — the bright-eyed fellow?' What more might follow, I never heard; for, at this point, in a perfect rapture of horror, I raised my hands — both hands — to both ears; and, without stopping to think or to apologize, I endeavored to restore equanimity to my disturbed sensibilities, by shutting out all further knowledge of Lamb's impieties. At length he seemed to have finished; so I, on my part, thought I might venture to take off the embargo: and, in fact, he *had* ceased; but

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no sooner did he find me restored to my hearing than he said, with a most sarcastic smile — which he could assume upon occasion — 'If you please, sir, we'll say grace before we begin.' I know not whether Lamb were really piqued or not at the mode by which I had expressed my disturbance: Miss Lamb certainly was not; her goodness led her to pardon me, and to treat me — in whatever light she might really view my almost involuntary rudeness — as the party who had suffered wrong; and, for the rest of the evening, she was so pointedly kind and conciliatory in her manner, that I felt greatly ashamed of my boyish failure in self-command. Yet, after all, Lamb necessarily appeared so much worse, in my eyes, as a traitor is worse than an open enemy.

Lamb, after this one visit — not knowing at that time any particular reason for continuing to seek his acquaintance — I did not trouble with my calls for some years. At length, however, about the year 1808, and for the six or seven following years, in my evening visits to Coleridge, I used to meet him again; not often, but sufficiently to correct altogether the very false impression I had received of his character and manners. I have elsewhere described him as a 'Diogenes with the heart of a St. John' — where, by the way, the reader must not, by laying the accent falsely on St. John, convert it into the name of Lord Bolingbroke: I meant St. John the evangelist. And by ascribing to Lamb any sort of resemblance to Diogenes, I had a view only to his plain speaking in the first place — his unequalled freedom from every mode of hypocrisy or affectation; and, secondly, to his talent for saying keen, pointed things, sudden flashes, or revelations of hidden truths, in a short condensed form of words. In fact, the very foundation of Lamb's peculiar character was laid in his absolute abhor-

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rence of all affectation. This showed itself in self-disparagement of every kind; never the mock disparagement, which is self-praise in an indirect form, as when people accuse themselves of all the virtues, by professing an inability to pay proper attention to prudence or economy — or uncontrollable disposition to be rash and inconsiderate on behalf of a weaker party when suffering apparent wrong. But Lamb's confessions of error, of infirmity, were never at any time acts of mock humility, meant to involve oblique compliment in the rebound. Thus, he honestly and frankly confessed his blank insensibility to music.

> 'King David's harp, that made the madness flee
> From Saul, had been but a Jew's harp to me,'

is his plain, unvarnished admission, in verses admirable for their wit and their elegance: nor did he attempt to break the force of this unfortunate truth, by claiming, which, perhaps, he might have claimed, a compensatory superiority in the endowments of his eye. It happened to him, as I believe it has often done to others — to Pope, perhaps, but certainly to Wordsworth — that the imperfect structure or imperfect development of the ear, denying any profound sensibility to the highest modes of impassioned music, has been balanced by a more than usual sensibility to some modes of visual beauty.

With respect to Wordsworth, it has been doubted, by some of his friends, upon very good grounds, whether, as a connoisseur in painting, he has a very learned eye, or one that can be relied upon. I hold it to be very doubtful, also, whether Wordsworth's judgment in the human face — its features and its expression — be altogether sound, and in conformity to the highest standards of art. But it is undeniable — and must be most familiar to all

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who have associated upon intimate terms with Wordsworth and his sister — that they both derive a pleasure, originally and organically more profound than is often witnessed, both from the forms and the coloring of rural nature. The very same tests by which I recognise my own sensibility to music, as rising above the common standard — viz., by the indispensableness of it to my daily comfort; the readiness with which I make any sacrifices to obtain a 'grand debauch' of this nature, &c. &c. — these, when applied to Wordsworth, manifest him to have an analogous craving, in a degree much transcending the general ratio for the luxuries of the eye. These luxuries Wordsworth seeks in their great original exemplar — in Nature as exhibiting herself amongst the bold forms and the rich but harmonious coloring of mountainous scenery; there especially, where the hand of injudicious art, or of mercenary craft, has not much interfered, with monotonous repetition of unmeaning forms with offensive outlines, or, still more, with harsh and glaring contrasts of color. The offence which strikes upon Wordsworth's eye from such disfigurations of nature is, really and without affectation, as keen, as intense, and as inevitable as to other men the pain to the mere physical eye-sight from the glare of snow or the irritations of flying dust. Lamb, on the other hand, sought his pleasures of this class — not, as by this time all the world knows, in external nature, for which it was his pleasure to profess, not merely an indifference, but even a horror which it delighted him to exaggerate with a kind of playful malice to those whom he was hoaxing — but in the works of the great painters: and for these I have good reason to think that both he and his sister had a peculiarly deep sensibility, and, after long practice, a fine and matured taste. Here, then, was both a gift and an attainment which Lamb might have fairly

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pleaded in the way of a set-off to his acknowledged defects of ear. But Lamb was too really and sincerely humble ever to think of nursing and tending his own character in any man's estimation, or of attempting to blunt the effect of his own honest avowals of imperfection, by dexterously playing off before your eyes some counterbalancing accomplishment. He was, in fact, as I have said before, the most humble and unpretending of human beings, the most thoroughly sincere, the most impatient of either simulation or dissimulation, and the one who threw himself the most unreservedly for your good opinion upon the plain natural expression of his real qualities, as nature had formed them, without artifice, or design, or disguise, more than you find in the most childlike of children.

There was a notion prevalent about Lamb, which I can affirm to have been a most erroneous one: it was — that any flagrant act of wickedness formed a recommendation to his favor. 'Ah!' said one man to me, when asking a letter of introduction from him — 'ah! that I could but recommend you as a man that had robbed the mail, or the King's exchequer — which would be better. In that case, I need not add a word; you would take rank instantly amongst the privileged friends of Lamb, without a word from me.' Now, as to '*the King's Exchequer*,' I cannot say. A man who should have placed himself in relation with Falstaff, by obeying his commands* at a distance of four centuries, (like the traveller, who demanded of the turnpikeman — 'How do you like your eggs dressed?' and, ten years after, on passing the same gate, received the monosyllabic reply — *poached*) — that man might have presented irresistible claims to Lamb's affection.

* 'Rob me thy father's exchequer.' — *Falstaff, in Henry IV., Part 1st.*

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Shakspeare, or anything connected with Shakspeare, might have proved too much for his Roman virtue. But, putting aside any case so impossible as this, I can affirm that — so far from this being the truth, or approaching the truth — a rule the very opposite governed Lamb's conduct: so far from welcoming wicked, profligate, or dissolute people by preference, if they happened to be clever — he bore with numerous dull people, stupid people, asinine people, for no other reason upon earth than because he knew them, or believed them to have been ill-used or oppressed by some clever but dissolute man. That was enough. Sufficient it was that they had been the objects of injustice, calumny, persecution, or wrong in any shape — and, without further question, they had 'their place allowed' at Lamb's fireside. I knew some eminent instances of what I am now saying. And I used to think to myself, Were this feature of Lamb's character made known, and the natural results followed, what would he do? Refuse anybody, reject anybody, tell him to begone, he could not, no more than he could have danced upon his mother's grave. He would have received all who presented themselves with any rational pretensions; and would finally have gone to prison rather than reject anybody. I do not say this rhetorically. I knew Lamb; and I know certain cases in which he was concerned — cases which it is difficult to publish with any regard to the feelings of persons now living, but which (if published in all their circumstances) would show him to be the very noblest of human beings. He was a man, in a sense more eminent than would be conceivable by many people, *princely* — nothing short of that in his beneficence. Many liberal people I have known in this world — many who were charitable in the widest sense — many munificent people; but never any one upon whom, for bounty, for

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indulgence and forgiveness, for charitable construction of doubtful or mixed actions, and for regal munificence, you might have thrown yourself with so absolute a reliance as upon this comparatively poor Charles Lamb. Considered as a man of genius, he was not in the very first rank, simply because his range was a contracted one: within that range, he was perfect; of the peculiar powers which he possessed, he has left to the world as exquisite a specimen as this planet is likely to exhibit. But, as a *moral* being, in the total compass of his relations to this world's duties, in the largeness and diffusiveness of his charity, in the graciousness of his condescension to inferior intellects, I am disposed, after a deliberate review of my own entire experience, to pronounce him the best man, the nearest in his approaches to an ideal standard of excellence, that I have known or read of. In the mingled purity — a child-like purity — and the benignity of his nature, I again express my own deep feeling of the truth, when I say that he recalled to my mind the image and character of St John the Evangelist — of him who was at once the beloved apostle, and also, more peculiarly, the apostle of love. Well and truly, therefore, did the poet say, in his beautiful lines upon this man's grave and memory —

'Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived!' *

* One feature there was in Lamb's charity, which is but too frequently found wanting amongst the most liberal and large-hearted of the charitable, and especially where the national temper is melancholy or desponding; one, moreover, which, beyond any other aspect of charity, wears a winning grace — one finally which is indistinctly pointed out as a *duty* in our scriptural code of ethics — the habit of *hoping* cheerfully and kindly on behalf of those who were otherwise objects of moral blame. Lamb, if anybody, plagued as he was by a constitutional taint of morbid melancholy, might have been privileged to fail in this duty; but he did not. His goodness, making it too painful to him to cherish

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Perhaps the foundation for the false notion I have mentioned about Lamb's predilections, was to be found in

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as *final* conclusions any opinions with regard to any individual which seemed to shut him out from the sympathy or the brotherly feeling of the just and good, overpowered the acuteness of his discernment; and, where it was quite impossible to find matter of approbation in the past or the present conduct, he would turn to the future for encouraging views of amendment, and would insist upon regarding what was past, as the accidental irregularity, the anomaly, the exception, warranting no inferences with regard to what remained; and (whenever that was possible) would charge it all upon unfortunate circumstances. Everybody must have felt the profound pathos of that passage in scripture — '*Let him that stole, steal no more;*' a pathos which rests evidently upon the sudden substitution for a judicial sentence proportioned to the offence, (such as an ordinary lawgiver would have uttered, and such as the listener anticipates,) of a heavenly light opened upon the guilty heart, showing to it a hope and an escape, and whispering that for itself also there may be final peace in reversion, where otherwise all had seemed blank despair and the darkness of coming vengeance. The poor benighted Pariah of social life — who durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, and, by the angry tone of human laws, as well as of society in general, finds but too much that disposes him to despond, and perhaps makes no effort, merely because all efforts seem likely to be unavailing — will often, in the simple utterance of a cheerful hope on his behalf, see as it were a window opening in heaven, and faces radiant with promise looking out upon him. These words I mean to apply as the distinguishing description of Christian ethics, as contrasted with all other ethical theories. For it is a just inquiry with respect to any system of morals — not merely, What are your substantial doctrines, what is the *corpus* of your laws? — but also, What is your preparatory discipline? — what are the means at your disposal for winning over the reluctant disciple, the bold recusant, or the timid doubter? And it is worthy of remark that, in this case of hoping on behalf of those who did seem no just objects of hope — the very same absence of all compromise with human infirmity is found, which a distinguished German infidel described as the great distinction of Christianity, and one which raised it *prima facie* above all other codes of morality. There is indeed a descent — a condescension to humanity and its weakness; but no shadow of a compromise — a capitulation — or what in Roman law is called a 'transaction' with it. For, said Immanuel Kant, here lies the point: — the Stoic maintains the moral principle in its ideal purity; he sacrifices nothing at all to human weakness; and so far he deserves praise. But then, for

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his carelessness for those social proscriptions which have sometimes occurred in our stormy times with respect to writers, male and female, who set the dominant notions, or the prevailing feelings of men — (feelings with regard to sexual proprieties, to social distinctions, to the sanctity of property, to the sanctity of religious formulæ, &c. &c.) — at open defiance. Take, for example, Thelwall, at one time, Holcroft, Godwin, Mrs. Wolstonecraft, Dr. Priestley, Hazlitt, all of whom were, more or less, in a backward or inverse sense, *tabooed* — that is, consecrated to public hatred and scorn: — with respect to all these persons, feeling that the public alienation had gone too far, or had begun originally upon false grounds, Lamb threw his heart and his doors wide open. Politics — what cared he for politics? Religion — in the sense of theological dogmas — what cared he for religion? For religion in its moral aspects, and its relations to the heart of man, no human being ever cared more. With respect to

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that same reason, he is useless: his standard is exalted beyond all human reproach. On the other hand, the Epicurean relaxes so far as to make *his* method of 'holiness' attainable. But how? It is by debasing and lowering the standard. Each, therefore, in a different sense, and for different reasons, is useless to human nature as it is. Now comes Christianity, and effects a synthesis of all which is good in each, while she purifies herself from all taint of what is evil. She presents a standard of holiness, a 'maximum perfectionis,' (as the scholastic phrase is,) no less exalted, no less jealous of all earthly taint or soil, than Stoicism. This, however, she makes accessible to man: not by any compromise or adaptation of its demands to a lower nature; but by means peculiarly her own — by promise of supernatural aid. Thus she is celestial like the one, and terrestrial like the other, but by such a reconciliation as celestial means only could effect. This Kant allowed to constitute a philosophic character for Christianity, which offered itself at the very vestibule. And in this function of hope, as one which is foremost amongst the functions of charity, there is the very same harmony of rigor in the judge, and loyalty to the standard erected, with human condescension and consideration for the criminal.

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politics, some of his friends could have wished him to hate men when they grew *anti-national*, and in that case only; but he would not. He persisted in liking men who made an idol of Napoleon, who sighed over the dread name of Waterloo, and frowned upon Trafalgar. *There* I thought him wrong; but, in that, as one of my guardians used to say of me, he 'followed his own devil;' though, after all, I believe he took a secret silent pleasure in the grandeur of his country, and would have suffered in her suffering — would have been humiliated in her humiliation — more than he altogether acknowledged to himself; in fact, his carelessness grew out of the depth of his security. He could well afford to be free of anxiety in a case like this; for the solicitudes of jealous affection, the tremulous and apprehensive love, as 'of a mother or a child,' (which painful mood of love Wordsworth professes for his country, but only in a wayward fit of passion,) could scarcely be thought applicable, even in the worst days of Napoleon, to a national grandeur and power which seem as little liable to chance or change, as essentially unapproachable by any serious impeachment, as the principle of gravitation or the composition of the air. Why, therefore, should *he* trouble himself more about the nice momentary oscillations of the national fortunes in war or council, more than about adjusting his balance, so as not to disturb the equilibrium of the earth.

There was another trait of character about Charles Lamb, which might have countenanced the common notion that he looked indulgently upon dissolute men, or men notorious for some criminal escapade. This was his thorough hatred of all hypocrisy, and his *practical* display of that hatred on all possible occasions. Even in a point so foreign, as it might seem, from this subject as his style, though chiefly founded upon his intellectual

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differences and his peculiar taste, the prevailing tone of it was in part influenced (or at least sustained) by his disgust for all which transcended the naked simplicity of truth. This is a deep subject, with as many faces, or *facets*, (to speak the language of jewellers,) as a rose-cut diamond; and far be it from me to say one word in praise of those — people of how narrow a sensibility! — who imagine that a simple (that is, according to many tastes, an unelevated and *unrythmical*) style — take, for instance, an Addisonian or a Swiftian style — is *unconditionally* good. Not so: all depends upon the subject; and there is a style, transcending these and all other modes of simplicity, by infinite degrees, and, in the same proportion, impossible to most men — the rhythmical — the continuous — what, in French, is called the *soutenu*, which, to humbler styles, stands in the relation of an organ to a shepherd's pipe. This also finds its justification in its subject; and the subject which *can* justify it must be of a corresponding quality — loftier — and, therefore, rare.

If, then, in style — so indirect an expression as *that* must be considered of his nature and moral feelings — how much more, in their direct and conscious expressions, was Lamb impatient of hypocrisy! Hypocrisy may be considered as the 'heroic' form of affectation. Now, the very basis of Lamb's character was laid in downright horror of affectation. If he found himself by accident using a rather fine word, notwithstanding it might be the most forcible in that place, (the word *arrest*, suppose, in certain situations, for the word *catch*,) he would, if it were allowed to stand, make merry with his own grandiloquence at the moment; and, in after moments, he would continually ridicule that class of words, by others carried to an extreme of pedantry — the word '*arride*,' for

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instance, used in the sense of *pleasing*, or *winning the approbation* — just as Charles Fox, another patron of simplicity, or, at least, of humility in style, was accustomed to use the word '*vilipend*,' as a standing way of sarcastically recalling to the reader's mind the Latinizing writers of English. Hence — that is, from this intense sincerity and truth of character — Lamb would allow himself to say things that shocked the feelings of the company — shocked sometimes in the sense of startling or electrifying, as by something that was odd; but also sometimes shocked with the sense of what was revolting, as by a Swiftian laying bare of naked shivering human nature. Such exposures of masquerading vanity — such surgical probings and vexings of the secret feelings — I have seen almost truculently pursued by Lamb. He seemed angry and fierce in such cases only; but the anger was for the affectation and insincerity, which he could not endure, unless where they covered some shame or timidity, never where they were masks for attacking an individual. The case of insincerity, above all others, which moved his bile, was where, out of some pretended homage to public decorum, an individual was run down on account of any moral infirmities, such as we all have, or have had, or at least so easily and naturally may have had, that nobody knows whether we have them or not. In such a case, and in this only almost, Lamb could be savage in his manner. I remember one instance, where many of the leading authors of our age were assembled — Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, &c. Lamb was amongst them; and, when —— was denounced as a man careless in the education of his children, and generally reputed to lead a licentious life — 'Pretty fellows *we* are,' said Lamb, 'to abuse him on that last score, when every one of us, I suppose, on going out this night into the

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Strand, will make up to the first pretty girl he sees.' Some laughed — some looked grim — some looked grand — but Wordsworth, smiling, and yet with solemnity, said — 'I hope, I trust, Mr. Lamb, you are mistaken, or, at least, you do not include us all in this sweeping judgment?' 'Oh, as to that,' said Lamb, 'who knows? There's no telling: sad Josephs are some of us in this very room.' Upon which everybody laughed, and Lamb amongst them; but he had been indignant and sincere in this rebuke of the hypocritical sacrifice to decorum. He manifested a fervor of feeling in such cases; not of anger primarily to the assailant — *that* was but a reaction — his fervor was a movement of intense and conscientious justice towards the person assailed, as in one who felt that he himself, if not by the very same trespasses, had erred and was liable to err; that he also was a brother in human infirmity, and a debtor to the frailty of all flesh, though not possibly by the same overt acts or habits.

In reviewing the life of Lamb, it is almost inevitable that, to a reader not specially acquainted with its events beyond what Serjeant Talfourd has judged it proper to communicate, many things will appear strange and unexplained. In a copy of the Serjeant's work, now lying before me, which had been borrowed for my use from a distinguished literary lady, I find a pencil mark of interrogation attached to the word '*chequered*,' by which, at p. 334, Vol. II., Lamb's life is characterized. This is a natural expression of surprise, under the suppressions which have been here practised; suppressions dictated alike by delicacy for what is too closely personal, and by reverential pity for what is too afflicting. Still it will be asked by those who read attentively, In what sense was Lamb's life *chequered*? As Wordsworth has scattered

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repeated allusions to this subject in his fine memorial verses on Lamb, allusions which must, for the present, be almost unintelligible to the great majority of readers; and, as he has done this, notwithstanding he was perfectly aware at the time of the Serjeant's reserve, and aware also that this reserve was not accidental, professing himself, moreover, to be

> 'Awed by the theme's peculiar sanctity,
> Which words less free,

(viz., the prose narrative of Lamb's biographer, which wanted, of necessity, the impassioned tenderness of a poetic memorial,)

> 'Presumed not even to touch;' —

under these circumstances it may be right, whilst still persisting in not raising that veil which has been dropped over this subject by Serjeant Talfourd, out of profound feelings for the surviving lady of the family, that sister of Charles Lamb who presented so much of his own genius and his own disposition, through a softened or lunar reflection, and who was the great consoler of his affliction — that sister,

> 'The meek,
> The self-restraining, and the ever kind,
> In whom *his* reason and intelligent heart
> Found — for all interests, hopes, and tender cares,
> All softening, humanizing, hallowing powers,
> Whether withheld or for her sake unsought —
> More than sufficient recompense:' —

still persisting, I say, out of veneration for this admirable lady, in refusing to raise the veil, it may yet be lawful so far to assist the reader in penetrating its folds, as that he may apprehend the main features of the case, in a degree sufficient for the application of Wordsworth's else partly

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unintelligible verses; and the more so, for these two reasons: — 1st, That several passages in these verses are calculated, at any rate, to pique the curiosity, although they do not satisfy it; 2dly, (which must especially be remembered,) A *mere* interest of curiosity, curiosity vulgar and disrespectful, cannot be imagined in this case. A curiosity which put the question suggested by the word *chequered*, and absolutely challenged by Wordsworth's verses, must be already one that has been hallowed and refined by a tender interest in the subject; since no interest short of that, could have attracted a reader to a life so poor in anecdote, or any other vulgar allurements, or, at least, no other could have detained him sufficiently upon its circumstantial parts, to allow of his raising the question.

To approach this question, therefore, in the most proper way, perhaps the very same verses of Wordsworth, which are amongst the parts of the Serjeant's book most fitted to suggest the question, are most fitted to suggest the answer. Being read carefully, without which they will do neither the one nor the other, they indicate their own commentary. One of the most beautiful passages, and, at the same time, of the most significant, is this: —

> 'Thus, 'mid a shifting world,
> Did they together testify of time
> And season's difference — a double tree,
> With two collateral stems sprung from one root;
> Such were they — such through life they *might* have been,
> In union, in partition only such:
> Otherwise wrought the will of the Most High.'

They might have exhibited the image of a double tree, in union, throughout their joint lives.* *Diis aliter visum*

* There is, however, an obscurity in the expression at this point of the verses; it lies partly in the word *such*. The only construction of the

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est. And then the poet goes on to shadow forth their real course through this world, and to hint at the sad cause which occasionally separated them, under the image of two ships launched jointly, and for the same voyage of discovery — viewing each other, therefore, as partners pursuing common objects, under common hazards and difficulties — often divided by stress of weather, often rejoining each other at the fixed places of rendezvous, again to be separated, and again to be reunited: —

'Yet, through all visitation and all trials,
Still they were faithful — like two vessels launch'd
From the same beach, one ocean to explore,
With mutual help, and sailing to their league
True, as inexorable winds, or bars
(Floating or fix'd) of polar ice, allow.'

But there is another passage still more distinctly pointing the reader's attention to the *recurring* cause of separation: —

'Ye were taught
That the remembrance of foregone distress
And the worse fear of future ill, (which oft
Doth hang around it, as a sickly child
Upon its mother,) may be both alike
Disarm'd of power to unsettle present good.'

This mysterious affliction, therefore, of Lamb's life, making that a 'chequered' one, which else had been of character too absolutely tranquil and monotonous — or

verses, in harmony with the words, seems the following: They might have appeared as a double tree, &c., whether viewed in those circumstances which united them — viz, in the features of resemblance — or viewed in those of difference, as sex and its moral results, which made the partition between them. Such they *might* have seemed; but calamity wrought a more perfect division between them, under which they seemed no longer one, but two distinct trees.

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ruffled, at least, only by *internal* irritations — was (as we learn from Wordsworth) of a nature to revolve upon him at intervals. One other passage — and this also from a poem of Wordsworth, but one written, at the very least, thirty-two years ago, and having no reference at all to the Lambs — may furnish all the additional light which can be needed. It is one of the poems published in 1807, and many of them suggested by personal or local recollections, from a tour then recently performed through Scotland. The poet is speaking of a woman on the Borders, whose appearance and peculiar situation, in relation to a disabled husband, had caught his attention; and the expression of her eye is thus noticed: —

> 'I look'd and scann'd her o'er and o'er —
> The more I looked, I wonder'd more;
> When suddenly I seem'd to espy
> A trouble in her strong black eye —
> A remnant of *uneasy light* —
> A flash of something *over-bright*.'

Now, if the reader will ask himself what cause, apt to recur, in some cases, would be likely to leave these morbid appearances in the eye, this *uneasy light*, and these flashes that were *over-bright* — he will then apprehend, in silence and reverential sympathy, what was that huge and steadfast affliction that besieged, through life, the heart of Charles Lamb.

If the reader will further understand that this affliction was not, as the heaviest afflictions oftentimes become, a mere remembrance echoing from past times — possibly 'a long since cancelled wo;' but that it was a two-headed snake, looking behind and before, and gnawing at his heart by the double pangs of memory, and of anxiety, gloomy and fearful, watching for the future; and, finally, that the object of this anxiety, who might at any moment

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be torn from his fireside, to return, after an interval of mutual suffering, (not to be measured, or even guessed at, but in the councils of God,) was that Madonna-like lady, who to him renewed the case described with such pathetic tenderness, by the Homeric Andromache — being, in fact, his 'all-the-world;' fulfilling at once all offices of tenderness and duty; and making up to him, in her single character of sister, all that he had lost of maternal kindness — all that for *her* sake he had forborne to seek of affections, conjugal or filial: — weighing these accumulated circumstances of calamity, the feeling reader will be ready to admit that Lamb's cup of earthly sorrow was full enough, to excuse many more than he could be taxed with, of those half-crazy eccentricities in which a constant load of secret affliction (such, I mean, as must not be explained to the world) is apt to discharge itself. Hence, it might be, in part — but some have supposed from a similar, though weaker taint of the same constitutional malady — that Lamb himself discovered symptoms of irregular feeling or thinking, not such as could have been alarming in a general or neutral case, but in a subject known to be affected by these hereditary predispositions, *were* alarming, both to his friends, (those of them, at least, who had known the circumstances,) and, with far heavier reason, to himself. This also is therefore to be added to his afflictions — not merely the fear, constantly impending, that his fireside (as I said before) might be rendered desolate, and *that* by a sudden blow, as well as for an indefinite duration; but also the fear (not equally strong, but equally impending for ever) that he himself, and all his splendid faculties, might, as by a flash of lightning, be swallowed up 'in darkness infinite.'*

* 'The angel ended his mysterious rite;
And the pure vision closed in darkness infinite.'

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Such was the condition of Charles Lamb, and such the temper that in part grew out of it — angelically benign, but also, in a morbid degree, melancholy — when I renewed my acquaintance with him in 1808–14; a period during which I learned to appreciate him better. Somewhere in this period it was, by the way, that I had an opportunity of introducing to his knowledge my brother, 'poor Pink.' Lamb liked him; and the more so, from an accident which occurred at the very second interview that he and Pink ever had. It was in Bond Street, at an exhibition of two large and splendid pictures, by Salvator Rosa; one representing a forest scene, and a forest recluse, (of what character, in Salvator's intention, may be doubted; but, in the little printed account of the paintings, he was described as Diogenes.) These pictures were, I should think, twelve feet high, at the least, consequently upon a large scale; and the tone of coloring was peculiarly sombre, or rather cold; and it tended even to the monotonous: one almost uniform cheerless tint of yellowish green, with some little perhaps of a warmish umber, overspread the distances; and the foreground showed little else than a heavy, dull-toned black. Pink, who knew as little of painting as the *bow'sons* of his various ships, had, however, a profound sensibility to some of its effects; and, if he ever ran up hastily and fearfully to London from Portsmouth, it was sure to be at the time when the annual exhibition of the Academy was open. No exhibition was ever missed by him, whether of a public or comparatively private nature. In particular, he had attended, with infinite delight, the exhibition (in Newman Street, I think) of Mr. West's pictures. *Death and his Pale Horse* prodigiously attracted him; and others, from the freshness and gorgeousness of their coloring, had absolutely fascinated his eye. It may be imagined, there-

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fore, with what disgust he viewed two subjects, from which the vast names of the painter had led him to expect so much, but which from the low style of the coloring yielded him so little. There might be forty people in the room at the time my brother and I were there. We had stood for ten or fourteen minutes, examining the pictures, when at length I noticed Charles Lamb, and, at a little distance, his sister. If a creditor had wished to seize upon either, no surer place in London (no, not Drury Lane, or Covent Garden) for finding them, than an exhibition from the works of the old masters. And, moreover, as amongst certain classes of birds, if you have one you are sure of the other, so with respect to the Lambs, (unless in those dreary seasons when the '*dual* unity' — as it is most affectingly termed by Wordsworth — had been for a time sundered into a widowed desolation, by the periodic affliction,) seeing or hearing the brother, you knew that the sister could not be far off. If she *were*, you sighed, knew what that meant, and asked no questions.

Lamb, upon seeing us, advanced to shake hands; but he paused one moment to await the critical dogma which he perceived to be at that time issuing from Pink's lips. That it was vituperation in a high degree, anybody near us might hear; and some actually turned round in fright upon catching these profane words: — 'D—— the fellow! I could do better myself.' Wherewith, perhaps unconsciously, but perhaps also by way of enforcing his thought, Pink (who had brought home from his long sea life a detestable practice of chewing tobacco) ejaculated a quid of some coarse quality, that lighted upon the frame of the great master's picture, and, for aught I know, may be sticking there yet. Lamb could not have approved such a judgment — nor perhaps the immeasurable pre-

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sumption that might seem to have accompanied such a judgment from most men, or from an artist; but he knew that Pink was a mere sailor, knowing nothing historically of art, nor much of the pretensions of the mighty artists. Or, had it been otherwise — at all events, he admired and loved, beyond all other qualities whatsoever, a hearty, cordial sincerity: honest homely obstinacy, not to be enslaved by a great name — though that, again, may, by possibility, become in process of time itself an affectation — Lamb almost reverenced; and therefore it need not surprise anybody, that, in the midst of his loud, unrepressed laughter, he came up to my brother, and offered his hand, with an air of friendliness that flattered Pink, and a little misled him: for, that evening, on dining with Pink, he said to me — 'That Lamb's a sensible fellow. You see how evidently he approved of what I remarked about that old humbugging rascal, Salvator Rosa.' Lamb, in this point, had a feature of character in common with Sir Walter Scott, (at least I suppose it to have been a feature of Sir Walter's mind, upon the information of Professor Wilson,) that, if a man had, or, if he supposed him to have, a strongly marked combination or tendency of feelings, of opinions, of likings, or of dislikings — what in fact, we call a *character* — no matter whether it were built upon prejudices the most extravagant, or ignorance the most profound, provided only it were sincere, and not mere lawless audacity, but were self-consistent, and had *unity* as respected itself — in that extent, he was sure to manifest liking and respect for the man. And hence it was, that Lamb liked Pink much more for this Gothic and outrageous sentence upon Salvator Rosa, than he would have liked him for the very best, profoundest, or most comprehensive critique upon that artist that could have been delivered. Pink, on the other hand, liked Lamb

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greatly: and used, in all his letters, to request that I would present his best regards to that Charles Lamb 'who wouldn't be humbugged by the old rascal in Bond Street.'

Thus I had gradually unlearned my false opinions, or outworn my false impressions, about Lamb, by the year 1814. Indeed, by that time, I may say that I had learned to appreciate Lamb almost at his full value. And reason there was that I should. For, in that year, 1814, occurred a trial of Lamb's hold upon his friends' regard, which was a test case — a test for each side — since not every man could have mastered this offence; and far less could every man have merited that a man *should* master it. This was the year which closed the great war of wars, by its first frail close — the capture of Paris by the Allies. And of these Allies, all who had any personal weight or interest (the Austrian Emperor, who was, however, expected at one time, is no exception — for *his* weight was not personal but political) — all, I say, visited London and Oxford. I was at London during that glad tumultuous season. I witnessed the fervent joy — the triumph, too noble, too religious, to be boastful — the rapture of that great era. Coleridge, in the first edition of the 'Friend,' has described the tempestuous joy of a people, habitually cold in relation to public events, upon occasion of a visit from their Sovereign's wife — the ill-fated Queen of Prussia; and this he does by way of illustrating the proposition which then occupies him — viz., the natural tendency of men to go beyonds the demands of any event, whether personal or national, their inevitable tendency to transcend it by the quality and the amount of their enthusiasm. Now, the scenes then acting in London were, in two weighty respects, different. In the first place, the people — the audience and spectators — concerned, were a people as widely opposed to the Prussians in sensibility of

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a profound nature as it is possible to imagine; the Prussians being *really* phlegmatic; and the British — as was many hundreds of times affirmed and (as far as the case admitted of proof) proved by the celebrated Walking Stewart, the profoundest of judges in this point — the British being, under the mask of a cold and reserved demeanor, the most impassioned of all nations: in fact, it requires but little philosophy to see, that, always, where the internal heat and power is greatest, there will the outside surface be the coldest; and the mere *primâ facie* phenomenon of heat, spread over the external manner, (as in the French or Italian character, and somewhat in the Irish,) is at once an evidence that there is little concentration of it at the heart. The spectators, then, the audience, were different; and the spectacle — oh, Heavens! — how far it must have differed from any that *can* have been witnessed for many centuries! Victors, victories, mere martial talents — were these the subjects of interest?

No man, not Lamb himself, could rate at a lower price such national vanities as these, fitted only, as I think, to win a schoolboy's sympathy. In fact, I have always entertained and avowed a theory upon the question of mere military talent, which goes far lower than anybody has yet gone, so far as I am aware; for I have gone so far as to maintain this doctrine — that, if we could detach from the contemplation of a battle the awful interests oftentimes depending upon its issue — if, in fact, we could liberate our minds from the Hartleian law of association, and insulate the mere talent there operating — we should hold the art of fighting a battle to be as far below the art of fighting a game at chess, as the skill applicable to the former case is less sure of its effect and less perfect than the skill applicable to the latter. It is true there are other

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functions of a commander-in-chief, involving large knowledge of human nature, great energy in action, great decision of character, supreme moral courage, and, above all, that rarest species, which faces, without shrinking, civil responsibility. These qualities, in any eminent degree, are rare. But, confining one's view to the mere art of fighting a battle, I hold and insist upon it, that the military art is (intellectually speaking) a vulgar art, a mechanic art, a very limitary art; neither liberal in its nature, nor elevated (as some mechanic arts are) by the extensive range of its details. With such opinions, I am not a person to be confounded with mere John-Bull exulters in national prowess. Not as victories won by English bayonets or artillery, but as victories in a sublime strife of the good principle with the bad, I entered with all my heart into the fulness of the popular feeling: I rejoiced with the universal nation then rejoicing. There was the "nation of London" (as I have before called it) to begin with; there was also another nation almost, collected within the walls of London at that time. I rejoiced, as I have said: Lamb did not. Then I was vexed.

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CHAPTER IV.

RECOLLECTIONS OF CHARLES LAMB.

It was summer. The earth groaned under foliage and flowers — fruits I was going to say, but, as yet, fruits were not — and the heart of man under the burthen of triumphant gratitude: man, I say; for surely to man, and not to England only, belonged the glory and the harvest of that unequalled triumph.* Triumph, however, in the sense of military triumph, was lost and swallowed up in the vast overthrow of evil, and of the evil principle. All nations sympathized with England — with England, as the centre of this great resurrection; centre for the power; centre, most of all, for the moral principle at work. It was, in fact, on that ground, and because all Europe felt and acknowledged that England had put a soul into the resistance to Napoleon, wherever and in whatever corner

* It is a favorite doctrine with some of the Radical Reformers, (thanks be to God! not with all,) to vilify and disparage the war with France, from 1793 to 1815, not (as might, perhaps, consistently be done, during some of its years,) but throughout and unconditionally — in its objects, its results, its principles. Even contemplating the extreme case of a conquest by France, some of the Radicals maintain, that we should not have suffered much; that the French were a civilized people; that, doubtless, they (here, however, it was forgotten that this 'they' was not the French people, but the French army) would not have abused their power, even suppose them to have gained possession of London. Candid reader! read Duppa's account of the French reign in Rome; *any* account of Davoust's in Hamburgh; *any* account of Junot's in Lisbon.

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manifested — therefore it was that now the crowned heads of Europe, 'with all their peerage,' paid a visit to this marvellous England. It was a distinct act of homage from all the thrones of Europe, now present on our shores, actually, or by representation. Certain it is, that these royal visits to England had no other ground than the astonishment felt for the moral grandeur of the country, which only, amongst all countries, had yielded nothing to fear — nothing to despondency; and also the astonishment felt, at any rate, by those incapable of higher emotions, for its enormous resources, which had been found adequate to the support, not only of its own colossal exertions, but of those made by almost half of Christendom besides. Never before in this world was there so large a congress of princes and illustrious leaders, attracted together by the mere force of unwilling, and, in some instances, jealous admiration. I was in London during that fervent carnival of national enthusiasm; and naturally, though no seeker of spectacles, I saw — for nobody who walked the streets of western London could avoid seeing — the chief objects of public interest. I was passing from Hyde Park along Piccadilly, on the day when the Emperor of Russia was expected. Many scores of thousands had gone out of London over Blackfriars' Bridge, expressly to meet him, on the understanding that he was to make his approach by that route. At the moment when I reached the steps of the Pulteney Hotel, a single carriage, of plain appearance, followed by two clumsy Cossack small landaus, (or rather what used to be called *sociables*,) approached at a rapid pace: so rapid that I had not time to pass before the waiters of the hotel had formed a line across the foot-pavement, intercepting the passing. In a moment, a cry arose — 'The Czar! the Czar!' — and before I could count six, I found myself in a crowd. The carriage door was

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opened, the steps let down, and one gentleman, unattended, stepped out. His purpose was to have passed through the avenue formed for him, in so rapid a way as to prevent any recognition of his person; but the cry in the street, the huzzas, and the trampling crowd, had brought to a front window on the drawing-room story a lady whom I had seen often before, and knew to be the Duchess of Oldenburg, the Emperor's sister. Her white dress caught the traveller's eye; and he stopped to kiss his hand to her. This action and attitude gave us all an admirable opportunity for scanning his features and whole personal appearance. There was nothing about it to impress one very favorably. His younger brother, the present Emperor, is described by all those who saw him, when travelling in Great Britain, as a man of dignified and impressive exterior. Not so with the Emperor Alexander: he was tall, and seemed likely to become corpulent as he advanced in life, (at that time he was not above thirty-seven;) and in his figure there seemed nothing particularly amiss. His dress, however, was unfortunate; it was a *green* surtout: now, it may be remarked, that men rarely assume this color who have not something French in their taste. His was so in all things, as might be expected from his French education under the literary fribble, Monsieur La Harpe.

But, waiving his appearance in other respects, what instantly repelled all thoughts of an *imperial* presence, was his unfortunate face. It was a face wearing a northern fairness, and not perhaps unamiable in its expression; but it was overladen with flesh, and expressed nothing at all; or, if anything, good humour, good nature, and considerable self-complacency. In fact, the only prominent feature in the Czar's disposition was, an amiable, somewhat sentimental ostentation — amiable, I say, for it was

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not connected with a gloomy pride or repulsive arrogance, but with a bland and winning vanity. And this cast of character was so far fortunate, as it supplied impulses to exertion, and irritated into activity a weak mind, that would else, by its natural tendencies, have sunk into torpor. His extensive travels, however, were judiciously fitted for rescuing him from that curse of splendid courts; and his greatest enemy had also been his greatest benefactor, though unintentionally, through the tempestuous agitations of the Russian mind, and of Russian society, in all its strata, during that most portentous of all romances — not excepting any of the crusades, or the adventurous expeditions of Cortez and Pizarro, still less the Parthian invasions of Crassus or of Julian — viz., the *anabasis* of Napoleon. There can be no doubt, to any reflecting mind, that the happiest part of his reign, even to Charles I., was that which was also, in a political sense, the period of his misfortunes — viz., the seven years between 1641 and 1649; three of which were occupied in stormy but adventurous war; and the other four in romantic journeys, escapes, and attempts at escape, checkered, doubtless, with trepidations and anxieties, hope and fear, grief and exultation, which, however much tainted with distress, still threw him upon his own resources of every kind, bodily not less than moral and intellectual, which else the lethargy of a court would have left undeveloped and unsuspected even by himself. Such also had been the quality of the Russian Emperor's experience for some of his later years; and such, probably, had been the result to his own comparative happiness. Yet it was said, that, about this time, the peace of Alexander's mind was beginning to give way. It is well known that a Russian emperor, lord of sixty million lives, is not lord of his own — not at any time. He sleeps always in the bosom

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of danger, secret, unfathomable, invisible. It is the inevitable condition of despotism and autocracy that he should do so. And the Russian Czar is, as to security, pretty nearly in the situation of the Roman Cæsar.

He, however, who is always and consciously in danger, may be supposed to become partially reconciled to it. But, be that as it may, it was supposed that, at this time, Alexander became aware of some special conspiracies that were ripening at home against his own person. It was rumored that, just about this time, in the very centre of exuberant jubilations, ascending from every people in Europe, he lost his serenity and cheerful temper. On this one occasion, in the moment of rejoining a sister, whom he was said to love with peculiar tenderness, he certainly looked happy; but, on several subsequent opportunities that I had of seeing him, he looked much otherwise; disturbed and thoughtful, and as if seeking to banish alarming images, by excess of turbulent gaiety, by dancing, or by any mode of distraction. Under this influence it was also, or was supposed to be, that he manifested unusual interest in religious speculations; diverting to these subjects, especially to those of a quietist character, (such as the doctrines of the English Quakers,) that enthusiasm which hitherto, for several years, he had dedicated to military studies and pursuits. Meantime, the most interesting feature belonging to the martial equipage which he drew after him, was the multitude of Tartar or other Asiatic objects, men, carriages, &c., prevailing in the crowd, and suggesting the enormous magnitude of the empire from whose remote provinces they came. There were also the European Tartars, the Cossacks, with their Hetman Platoff. He had his abode somewhere to the north of Oxford Street; and further illustrated the imperial grandeur, being himself a sovereign prince, and yet

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a vassal when he found himself in the presence of Alexander. This prince, who (as is well known) loved and honored the English, as he afterwards testified by the most princely welcome to all of that nation who visited his territories, was, on his part, equally a favorite with the English. He had lost his gallant son in a cavalry skirmish; and his spirits had been much depressed by that calamity. But he so far commanded himself as to make his private feelings give way to his public enthusiasm; and he never withdrew himself from the clamorous applause of the mob, in which he took an undisguised pleasure. This was the man, amongst all the public visiters now claiming the hospitality of the English Regent, whom Lamb saw and talked of with most pleasure. His sublime ugliness was most delectable to him; and the Tartar propensities, some of which had been perhaps exaggerated by the newspapers, (such, for instance, as their drinking the oil out of the street lamps,) furnished him with a constant *feu-de-joie* of jests and playful fictions, at the expense of the Hetman; and in that way it was that he chiefly expressed *his* sympathy with this great festal display.

Marshal Blucher, who still more powerfully converged upon himself the interest of the public, was lodged in a little quadrangle of St. James' Palace, (that to the right of the clock-tower entrance.) So imperious and exacting was the general curiosity to see the features of the old soldier — this Marshal '*Forwards*,' as he was always called in Germany, and who had exhibited the greater merit of an Abdiel fidelity, on occasion of the mighty day of Jena, — that the court was filled from an early hour of every morning, until a late dinner hour, with a mob of all ranks, calling for him by his name, *tout court*, 'Blucher! Blucher!' At short intervals, not

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longer in general than five minutes, the old warrior obeyed the summons throughout the day, unless when he was known to be absent on some public occasion. His slavery must have been most wearisome to his feelings. But he submitted with the utmost good nature, and allowed cheerfully for the enthusiasm which did so much honor to himself and to his country. In fact, this enthusiasm, on his first arrival in London, showed itself in a way that astonished everybody, and was half calculated to alarm a stranger. He had directed the postilion to proceed straightway to Carlton House — his purpose being to present his duty in person to the Regent, before he rested upon English ground. This was his way of expressing his homage to the British nation, for upholding, through all fortunes, that sacred cause of which he also had never despaired. Moreover, his hatred of France, and the very name French, was so intense, that upon that title also he cherished an ancient love towards England. As the carriage passed through the gateway of the Horse-Guards, the crowd, which had discovered him, became enormous. When the garden or Park entrance to the palace was thrown open, to admit Blucher, the vast mob, for the first and the last time, carried the entrance as if by storm. All opposition from the porters, the police, the soldiers on duty, was vain; and many thousands of people accompanied the veteran prince, literally 'hustling' his carriage, and, in a manner, carrying him in their arms to the steps of the palace door; on the top of which, waiting to receive him, stood the English Regent. The Regent himself smiled graciously and approvingly upon this outrage, which, on any minor occasion, would have struck him with consternation, perhaps, as well as disgust.

Lamb, I believe, as well as myself, witnessed part of

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this scene; which was the most emphatic exhibition of an uncontrollable impulse — a perfect rapture of joy and exultation, possessing a vast multitude with entire unity of feeling, that I have ever witnessed, excepting, indeed, once besides, and that was a scene of the very same kind, or rather a reflection of the same scene. It occurred in Hyde Park, on the following Sunday: Prince Blucher and his master, the King of Prussia; the Hetman of the Cossacks, with his master, the Czar; the Duke of Wellington, with some of the royal Dukes, and a vast *cortége* of civil and military dignities — in short, the élite of all the great names that had grown into distinction in the late wonderful campaigns — German, Spanish, French — rode into the Park, simultaneously. If there had been any division of their several suites and parties, this had vanished; and all were thrown into one splendid confusion, under a summer sun. The Park was, of course, floating with a sea of human heads. And, in particular, there was a dense mass of horsemen, amounting to six thousand at the least, (as I was told by a person accustomed to compute crowds,) following close in the rear. The van of this mighty body, composed of so many 'princedoms, dominations, virtues, powers,' directed their course to Kensington Gardens — into these, as privileged guests, they were admitted — precautions, founded on the Carlton House experience, having been taken to exclude the *ignobile vulgus* who followed. The impulse, however, of the occasion, was too mighty for the case. The spectacle was absolutely sublime — of hurricane, instantaneous power, sweeping away, like an Alpine lake broken loose, all barriers almost before they were seen. The six thousand horsemen charged into the gardens; that being (as in the other case) the first and also the last intrusion of the kind.

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One thing in this popular festival of rejoicing was peculiarly pleasing to myself and to many others — the proof that was thus afforded to so many eminent foreigners of our liberality, and total freedom from a narrow or ungenerous nationality. This is a grave theme, and one which, on account of the vast superstructure reared upon it, of calumnious insult to our national character, requires a separate discussion. Here it may be sufficient to say, that Marshal Blucher, at least, could have no reason to think us an arrogant people, or narrow in our national sensibilities to merit, wherever found. He could not but know that we had also great military names to show — one or two greater than his own; for, in reality, his qualities were those of a mere fighting captain, with no great reach of capacity, and of slender accomplishments. Yet we — that is to say, even the street mob of London — glorified him as much as ever they did Lord Nelson, and more than they ever did the Duke of Wellington. In this crowd, on this memorable Sunday, by-the-by, rode Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg, as yet obscure and poor, (not having £300 a year,) and seeing neither his future prosperity, nor its sudden blight, nor its resurrection. There also rode the Prince of Orange, and many another, who was to reap laurels in the coming year, but was yet dreaming not of Waterloo as a possibility. With respect to Blucher, however, it is painful to know that he, who was now so agreeably convinced of our national generosity, came afterwards to show that jealousy of us which we had so loudly refused to feel of him, through the mere mortifications practised on his self-esteem, perhaps maliciously, by the French authorities, in passing by himself and addressing their applications to the Duke of Wellington.

Fouché, Chaboulon de la Râtre, and other writers, have recorded the maniacal rage of Prince Blucher,

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when dispatches from Paris passed through his camp — nay, were forwarded to his head-quarters, in order to gain — what? Audience from him? No. Sanction from him? No. Merely a countersign, or a passport for the messenger; some purely ministerial act of participation in the transit of the courier; the dispatches being uniformly for the Duke of Wellington. This, on the part of the French authorities, must have been, in some respects, a malicious act. Doubtless, the English general was known only in the character of a victor; whereas Blucher (and *that* the old testy hussar should have remembered) had never been known at Paris, for anything but defeats; and, within the week preceding, for a signal defeat, which many think might have been ripened into a smashing overthrow. But, still, there can be no doubt that deadly malice towards the Prussian name was the true ground of the act; for the Parisians bore (and still bear) a hatred to the Prussians, absolutely irrational and inexplicable. The battle of Rosbach can hardly have been the reason, still less the Prussian resumption of the trophies then gathered from France, and subsequently carried off by Napoleon; for, as yet, they had *not* been resumed. The ground of this hatred must have lain in the famous manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick — for he, as a servant of the Prussian throne, and commanding a Prussian army, was looked upon as a Prussian. This change, however, in Blucher — this jealousy of England, within so short a time — astonished and grieved all who had seen him amongst ourselves. Many a time I met him in the street; four or five times in streets where he could not have been looked for — the streets of the *city;* and always with a retinue of applauders, that spread like wildfire. Once only he seemed to have a chance for passing *incognito.* It was in Cheapside. He

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was riding, as he generally was, in the open carriage (on this occasion a curricle) of some gentleman with whom he was going to dine, at a villa near London. A brewer's waggon stopped the way for two minutes; in that space of time, twenty people crowded about who knew his features: — 'Blucher! Blucher!' resounded through the street in a moment; an uproar rose to heaven; and the old Marshal's face relaxed from its gravity, or its sternness, (though, to say the truth, there was little of determinate expression in his features; and, if he had not been so memorable a person, one would have thought him a mere snuffy old German) — relaxing, however, from his habitual tom-cat gravity, he looked gracious and benign. Then, at least, he loved us English; then he had reason to love us; for we made a pet of him; and a pet in a cause which would yet make his bones stir in the grave — in the national cause of Prussia against France. I have oftened wondered that he did not go mad with the fumes of gratified vengeance. Revenge is a luxury, to those who *can* rejoice in it at all, so inebriating that possibly a man would be equally liable to madness, from the perfect gratification of his vindictive hatred or its perfect defeat. And, hence, it may have been that Blucher did *not* go mad. Few men have had so ample a vengeance as he, when holding Paris as a conqueror: and, yet, because he was but one of several who so held it, and because he was prevented from mining and blowing up the bridge of Jena, in that way, perhaps, the delirium of his vengeance became less intoxicating.

Now, returning to Lamb, I may remark that, at this memorable season, his wayward nature showed itself more conspicuously than ever. One might have thought that, if he manifested no sympathy in a direct shape with the primary cause of the public emotion, still he would

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have sympathized, in a secondary way, with the delirious joy which every street, every alley, then manifested, to the ear as well as to the eye. But no! Still, like Diogenes, he threw upon us all a scoffing air, as of one who stands upon a pedestal of eternity, looking down upon those who share in the transitory feelings of their own age. How he felt in the following year, when the mighty drama was consummated by Waterloo, I cannot say, for I was not then in London: I guess, however, that he would have manifested pretty much the same cynical contempt for us children of the time, that he did in all former cases.

Not until 1821, and again in 1823, did I come to know Charles Lamb thoroughly. Politics, national enthusiasm, had then gone to sleep. I had come up to London in a case connected with my own private interest. In the same spirit of frankness that I have shown on other occasions in these personal sketches, I shall here not scruple to mention, that certain pecuniary embarrassments had rendered it necessary that I should extricate myself by literary toils. I was ill at that time, and for years after — ill from the effects of opium upon the liver; and one primary indication of any illness felt in that organ, is peculiar depression of spirits. Hence arose a singular effect of reciprocal action, in maintaining a state of dejection. From the original physical depression caused by the derangement of the liver, arose a sympathetic depression of the mind, disposing me to believe that I never *could* extricate myself; and from this belief arose, by reaction, a thousand-fold increase of the physical depression. I began to view my unhappy London life — a life of literary toils, odious to my heart — as a permanent state of exile from my Westmoreland home. My three eldest children, at that time in the most interesting stages

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of childhood and infancy, were in Westmoreland; and so powerful was my feeling (derived merely from a deranged liver) of some long, never-ending separation from my family, that at length, in pure weakness of mind, I was obliged to relinquish my daily walks in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, from the misery of seeing children in multitudes, that too forcibly recalled my own. The Picture of Fox-ghyll, my Westmoreland abode, and the solitary fells about it, upon which those were roaming whom I could not see, was for ever before my eyes. And it must be remembered that distance — the mere amount of distance — has much to do in such a case. You are equally divided from those you love, it is very true, by one hundred miles. But that, being a space which in England we often traverse in eight or ten hours, even without the benefit of railroads, has come to seem nothing at all. Fox-ghyll, on the other hand, was two hundred and eighty miles distant; and from the obstacles at the latter end of the journey, (cross-roads and interruptions of all public communications, (it seemed twice as long.

Meantime, it is very true that the labors I had to face would not, even to myself, in a state of good bodily health, have appeared alarming. *Myself*, I say — for, in any state of health, I do not write with rapidity. Under the influence of opium, however, when it reaches its maximum in diseasing the liver and deranging the digestive functions, all exertion whatever is revolting in excess; intellectual exertion, above all, is connected habitually, when performed under opium influence, with a sense of disgust the most profound for the subject (no matter what) which detains the thoughts; all that morning freshness of animal spirits, which, under ordinary circumstances, consumes, as it were, and swallows up the interval be-

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tween one's self and one's distant object, (consumes, that is in the same sense as Virgil describes a high-blooded horse on the fret for starting, as traversing the ground with his eye, and devouring the distance in fancy before it is approached) — all that dewy freshness is exhaled and burnt off by the parching effects of opium on the animal economy. You feel like one of Swift's *Strulbrugs*, prematurely exhausted of life; and molehills are inevitably exaggerated by the feelings into mountains. Not that it was molehills exactly which I had then to surmount — they were moderate hills; but that made it all the worse in the result, since my judgment could not altogether refuse to go along with my feelings. I was, besides, and had been for some time, engaged in the task of unthreading the labyrinth by which I had reached, unawares, my present state of slavery to opium. I was descending the mighty ladder, stretching to the clouds as it seemed, by which I had imperceptibly attained my giddy altitude — that point from which it had seemed equally impossible to go forward or backward. To wean myself from opium, I had resolved inexorably; and finally I accomplished my vow. But the transition state was the worst state of all to support. All the pains of martyrdom were there: all the ravages in the economy of the great central organ, the stomach, which had been wrought by opium; the sickening disgust which attended each separate respiration; and the rooted depravation of the appetite and the digestion — all these must be weathered for months upon months, and without the stimulus (however false and treacherous) which, for some part of each day, the old doses of laudanum would have supplied. These doses were to be continually diminished; and, under this difficult dilemma — if, as some people advised, the diminution were made by so trifling a quantity as to be imperceptible

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— in that case, the duration of the process was interminable and hopeless. Thirty years would not have sufficed to carry it through. On the other hand, if twenty-five to fifty drops were withdrawn on each day, (that is, from one to two grains of opium,) inevitably within three, four, or five days, the deduction began to tell grievously; and the effect was, to restore the craving for opium more keenly than ever. There was the collision of both evils — that from the laudanum, and that from the want of laudanum. The last was a state of distress perpetually increasing, the other was one which did not sensibly diminish — no, not for a long period of months. Irregular motions, impressed by a potent agent upon the blood or other processes of life, are slow to subside; they maintain themselves long after the exciting cause has been partially or even wholly withdrawn; and, in my case, they did not perfectly subside into the motion of tranquil health, for several years.

From all this it will be easy to understand the *fact* — though, after all, impossible, without a similar experience, to understand the *amount* — of my suffering and despondency in the daily task upon which circumstances had thrown me at this period — the task of writing and producing something for the journals, *invita Minerva*. Over and above the principal operation of my suffering state, as felt in the enormous difficulty with which it loaded every act of exertion, there was another secondary effect which always followed as a reaction from the first. And that this was no accident or peculiarity attached to my individual temperament, I may presume from the circumstance, that Mr. Coleridge experienced the very same sensations, in the same situation, throughout his literary life, and has often noticed it to me with surprise and vexation. The sensation was that of powerful disgust

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with any subject upon which he had occupied his thoughts, or had exerted his powers of composition for any length of time, and an equal disgust with the result of his exertions — powerful abhorrence I may call it, absolute loathing, of all that he had produced. In Mr. Coleridge's case, speaking at least of the time from 1807 to 1815, this effect was a most unhappy one ; as it tended to check or even to suppress his attemps at writing for the press, in a degree which cannot but have been very injurious for all of us who wished to benefit by his original intellect, then in the very pomp of its vigor. This effect was, indeed, more extensive than with myself: with Coleridge, even *talking* upon a subject, and throwing out his thoughts upon it liberally and generally, was an insurmountable bar to writing upon it with effect. In the same proportion in which he had been felicitous as a talker, did he come to loathe and recoil from the subject ever afterwards; or, at least, so long as any impressions remained behind of his own display. And so far did this go — so uniformly, and so notoriously to those about him — that Miss Hutchinson, a young lady in those days whom Coleridge greatly admired and loved as a sister, submitted at times to the trouble of taking down what fell from his lips, in the hope that it might serve as materials to be worked up at some future period, when the disgust should have subsided, or perhaps in spite of that disgust, when he should see the topics and their illustrations all collected for him, without the painful effort of recovering them by calling up loathsome trains of thought. It was even suggested, and at one time (I believe) formally proposed, by some of Coleridge's friends, that, to save from perishing the overflowing opulence of golden thoughts continually welling up and flowing to waste in the course of his ordinary conversation, some short-hand

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writer, having the suitable accomplishments of a learned education and habits of study, should be introduced as a domestic companion. But the scheme was dropped; perhaps from the feeling, in Coleridge himself, that he would not command his usual felicity, or his natural power of thought, under the consciousness of an echo sitting by his side, and repeating to the world all the half-developed thoughts or half-expressed suggestions which he might happen to throw out. In the mean time, for the want of some such attendant, certain it is, that many valuable papers perished.

In 1810, 'The Friend' was in a course of publication by single sheets of sixteen pages. These, by the terms of the prospectus, should have appeared weekly. But if, at any time, it happened that Wordsworth, or anybody else interested in the theme, came into Coleridge's study whilst he was commencing his periodical lucubrations, and, naturally enough, led him into an oral disquisition upon it, then perished all chance for that week's fulfilment of the contract. Miss Hutchinson, who was aware of this, did her best to throw hindrances in the way of this catastrophe, but too often ineffectually: and, accordingly, to this cause, as a principal one amongst others, may be ascribed the very irregular intervals between the several numbers of 'The Friend' in its first edition; and to this, also, perhaps, the abrupt termination of the whole at the twenty-ninth number. In after years, Coleridge assured me, that he never could read anything he had written without a sense of overpowering disgust. Reverting to my own case, which was pretty nearly the same as his, there was, however, this difference — that, at times, when I had slept at more regular hours for several nights consecutively, and had armed myself by a sudden increase of the opium for a few days running, I recovered, at times,

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a remarkable glow of jovial spirits. In some such artificial respites, it was, from my usual state of distress, and purchased at a heavy price of subsequent suffering, that I wrote the greater part of the Opium Confessions in the autumn of 1821. The introductory part, (*i. e.*, the narrative part,) written for the double purpose of creating an interest in what followed, and of making it intelligible, since, without this narration, the dreams (which were the real object of the whole work) would have had no meaning, but would have been mere incoherencies — this narrative part was written with singular rapidity. The rest might be said to have occupied an unusual length of time ; since, though the mere penmanship might have been performed within moderate limits, (and in fact under some pressure from the printer,) the dreams had been composed slowly, and by separate efforts of thought, at wide intervals of time, according to the accidental prevalence, at any particular time, of the separate elements of such dream in my own real dream-experience. These circumstances I mention to account for my having written anything in a happy or genial state of mind, when I was in a general state so opposite, by my own description, to everything like enjoyment. That description, as a *general* one, states most truly the unhappy condition, and the somewhat extraordinary condition of feeling, to which opium had brought me. I, like Mr. Coleridge, could not endure what I had written for some time after I had written it. I also shrunk from treating any subject which I had much considered ; but more, I believe, as recoiling from the intricacy and the elaborateness which had been made known to me in the course of considering it, and on account of the difficulty or the toilsomeness, which might be fairly presumed from the mere fact that I *had* long considered it, or could have found it necessary

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to do so, than from any blind mechanical feeling inevitably associated (as in Coleridge it was) with a second survey of the same subject.

One other effect there was from the opium, and I believe it had some place in Coleridge's list of morbid affections caused by opium, and of disturbances extended even to the intellect — which was, that the judgment was for a time grievously impaired, sometimes even totally abolished, as applied to anything which I had recently written. Fresh from the labor of composition, I believe, indeed, that almost every man, unless he has had a very long and close experience in the practice of writing, finds himself a little dazzled and bewildered in computing the effect, as it will appear to neutral eyes, of what he has produced. This result, from the hurry and effort of composition, doubtless we all experience, or at some time *have* experienced. But the incapacitation which I speak of here, as due to opium, is of another kind and another degree. It is mere childish helplessness, or senile paralysis, of the judgment, which distresses the man in attempting to grasp the upshot and the total effect (the *tout ensemble*) of what he has himself so recently produced. There is the same imbecility in attempting to hold things steadily together, and to bring them under a comprehensive or unifying act of the judging faculty, as there is in the efforts of a drunken man to follow a chain of reasoning. Opium is said to have some *specific* effect of debilitation upon the memory ;* that is, not merely the

* The *technical* memory, or that which depends upon purely arbitrary links of connection, and therefore more upon a *nisus* or separate activity of the mind — that memory, for instance, which recalls names — is undoubtedly affected, and most powerfully, by opium. On the other hand, the *logical* memory, or that which recalls facts that are connected by fixed relations, and where A being given, B must go before or after — historical memory, for instance — is not much if at all affected by opium.

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general one which might be supposed to accompany its morbid effects upon the bodily system, but some other, more direct, subtle, and exclusive; and this, of whatever nature, may possibly extend to the faculty of judging.

Such, however, over and above the more known and more obvious ill effects upon the spirits and the health, were some of the stronger and more subtle effects of opium in disturbing the intellectual system, as well as the animal, the functions of the will also no less than those of the intellect, from which both Coleridge and myself were suffering at the period to which I now refer (1821–25) — evils which found their fullest exemplification in the very act upon which circumstances had now thrown me as the *sine qua non* of my extrication from difficulties — viz., the act of literary composition. This necessity, the fact of its being my one sole resource for the present, and the established experience which I now had of the peculiar embarrassments and counteracting forces which I should find in opium, but still more in the train of consequences left behind by past opium — strongly co-operated with the mere physical despondency arising out of the liver. And this state of partial unhappiness, amongst other outward indications, expressed itself by one mark, which some people are apt greatly to misapprehend, as if it were some result of a sentimental turn of feeling — I mean perpetual sighs. But medical men must very well know, that a certain state of the liver, *mechanically*, and without any co-operation of the will, expresses itself in sighs. I was much too firm-minded, and too reasonable, to murmur or complain. I certainly suffered deeply, as one who finds himself a banished man from all that he loves, and who had not the consolations of hope, but feared too profoundly that all my efforts — efforts poisoned so sadly by opium — might be unavailing for the end. But still I

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endured in silence. The mechanical sighs, however, revealed, or seemed to reveal, what was present in my thoughts. Lamb doubtless remarked them; he knew the general outline of my situation; and, after this, he set himself, with all the kindness of a brother, Miss Lamb with the kindness of a sister, to relieve my gloom by the closest attentions. They absolutely persecuted me with hospitalities; and, as it was by their fireside that I felt most cheered, and sometimes elevated into hope, it may be supposed that I did not neglect to avail myself of the golden hours thus benignantly interposed amongst my hours of solitude, despondency, and labor but partially effectual.

Thus then it arose, and at this period, that I had my first experience of Lamb's nature and peculiar powers. During one part of the time, I, whose lodgings were in York Street, Covent Garden, became near neighbor to the Lambs — who (with a view to the two great theatres, I believe) emigrated for some months from the Temple to Russell Street. With their usual delicacy, the Lambs seemed to guess that, in my frame of mind, society of a mixed character might not be acceptable to me. Accordingly, they did not ask me to their parties, unless where they happened to be small ones; but, as often as they were free of engagements themselves, they would take no denial — come I must, to dine with them and stay as late as I would. The very first time on which these dinner invitations began, a scene occurred with Charles Lamb, which so nearly resembled the Coleridge and 'Ancient Mariner' mystification of years long past, that, perhaps, with all my knowledge of his character, I might have supposed him angry or offended in good earnest, had I not recurred to the lesson of that early introductory visit to the Temple. Some accident, or perhaps it was

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Lamb himself, had introduced the subject of Hazlitt. Aware of Lamb's regard for him, and of what I esteemed his exaggerated estimate of Hazlitt's powers, I fought shy of any opinion upon him. The fact is, somewhere about that time — but I am not sure whether this had yet happened — Hazlitt had published a little book which was universally laughed at, but which, in one view of it, greatly raised him in my opinion, by showing him to be capable of stronger and more agitating passions than I believed to be within the range of his nature. He had published his 'Liber Amoris, or the Modern Pygmalion.' And the circumstances of the case were these: — In a lodging-house, which was also, perhaps, a boarding-house, in the neighborhood of Lincoln's Inn, Hazlitt had rooms. The young woman who waited on him, was a daughter of the master of the house. She is described by Hazlitt, whose eye had been long familiar with the beauty (real or ideal) of the painters, as a woman of bewitching features; though one thing, which he confesses in his book, or did confess in conversation, made much against it — viz., that she had a look of being somewhat jaded, as if she were unwell, or the freshness of the animal sensibilities gone by. This girl must evidently have been a mercenary person. Well, if she were not an intriguer in the worst sense — in the sense of a schemer, she certainly was. Hazlitt, however, for many weeks (months perhaps) paid her the most delicate attentions, attributing to her a refinement and purity of character to which he afterwards believed that she had no sort of pretensions. All this time — and here was the part of Hazlitt's conduct which extorted some sympathy and honor from me — he went up and down London, raving about this girl. Nothing else would he talk of. 'Have you heard of Miss ——?' And then, to the

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most indifferent stranger, he would hurry into a rapturous account of her beauty. For this he was abundantly laughed at. And, as he could not fail to know this — (for the original vice of his character, was dark, sidelong suspicion, want of noble confidence in the nobilities of human nature, faith too infirm in what was good and great) — this being so, I do maintain that a passion, capable of stifling and transcending what was so prominent in his own nature, was, and must have been (however erroneously planted) a noble affection, and justifying that sympathy which I so cordially yielded him. I must reverence a man, be he what he may otherwise, who shows himself capable of profound love.

On this occasion, in consequence of something I said very much like what I am now saying, Hazlitt sent me a copy of his 'Liber Amoris;' which, by the way, bore upon the title-page an engraved copy of a female figure — by what painter I forget at this moment, but I think by Titian — which, as Hazlitt imagined, closely resembled the object of his present adoration. The issue for Hazlitt, the unhappy issue, of the tale, was as follows: — The girl was a heartless coquette; her father was an humble tradesman, (a tailor, I think;) but her sister had married very much above her rank; and she, who had the same or greater pretensions personally, now stood on so far better ground than her sister, as she could plead, which originally her sister could not, some good connections. Partly, therefore, she acted in a spirit of manœuvring as regarded Hazlitt: he might do as a *pis aller*, but she hoped to do better; partly also she acted on a more natural impulse. It happened that, amongst the gentleman lodgers, was another, more favored by nature, as to person, than ever Hazlitt had been; and Hazlitt was now somewhat withered by life and its cares. This stranger

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was her 'fancy-man.' Hazlitt suspected something of this for a long time; suspected, doted, and was again persuaded to abandon his suspicions; and yet he could not relish her long conversations with this gentleman. What could they have to say, unless their hearts furnished a subject? Probably the girl would have confessed at once a preference, which, perhaps, she might have no good reason for denying, had it not been that Hazlitt's lavish liberality induced him to overwhelm her with valuable presents. These she had no mind to renounce. And thus she went on, deceiving, and beguiling, and betraying poor Hazlitt, now half crazy with passion, until one fatal Sunday. On that day, (the time was evening, in the dusk,) with no particular object, but unhappy because he knew that she was gone out, and with some thought that, in the wilderness of London, he might, by chance, stumble upon her, Hazlitt went out; and not a half mile had he gone, when, all at once, he fancied that he saw her. A second and nearer glance showed him that he was right. She it was, but hanging on the arm of the hated rival — of him whom she had a hundred times sworn that she never spoke to but upon the business of the house. Hazlitt saw, but was not seen. In the blindness of love, hatred, and despair, he followed them home; kept close behind them; was witness to the blandishments freely interchanged, and soon after he parted with her for ever. Even his works of criticism, this dissembling girl had accepted or asked for as presents, with what affectation and hypocrisy Hazlitt now fully understood. In his book, he, in a manner, 'whistles her down the wind;' notwithstanding that, even at that time, 'her jesses' were even yet 'his heart-strings.' There is, in the last apostrophe to her — 'Poor weed!' — something which, though bitter and contemptuous, is yet

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tender and gentle; and, even from the book, but much more from the affair itself, as then reported with all its necessary circumstances, something which redeemed Hazlitt from the reproach (which till then he bore) of being open to no grand or profound enthusiasm — no overmastering passion. But now he showed indeed —

'The nympholepsy of some fond despair.'

Perhaps this furnished the occasion of our falling upon the subject of Hazlitt. What was said will better come in upon another occasion — (viz., that of Hazlitt.) Meantime that Lamb only counterfeited anger, appeared from this — that, after tea, he read me his own fine verses on 'The Three Graces;' and, that I might not go off with the notion that he read only his own verses, afterwards he read, and read beautifully — for of all our poets Lamb only and Wordsworth read well — a most beautiful sonnet of Lord Thurlow, on 'Lacken Water.'

In answer to what I considered Lamb's extravagant estimate of Hazlitt, I had said, that the misanthropy which gives so unpleasant a tone to that writer's works, was, of itself, sufficient to disgust a reader whose feelings do not happen to flow in that channel; that it was, moreover, a crude misanthropy, not resting upon any consistent basis, representing no great principles good or bad, but simply the peevishness of a disappointed man. I admitted that such a passion as a noble misanthropy was possible; but that there was an ignoble misanthropy; or, (taking an illustration, which I knew would tell with Lamb better than all arguments,) on the one hand, there was the lofty, nay sublime, misanthropy of Timon; on the other, the low villanous misanthropy of Apemantus. Now, the cynicism of Hazlitt, as also of another writer, who, in our times, affected misanthropy, if not exactly

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that of Apemantus, was too much akin to it; not built on the wild indignation of a generous nature, outraged in its best feelings, but in the envy of a discontented one. Lamb paused a little; but at length said, that it was for the intellectual Hazlitt, not the moral Hazlitt, that he professed so much admiration. Now, as all people must admit the splendid originality of much that Hazlitt has done, here there might have been a ready means, by favor of the latitude allowed to general expressions, for one, like me, who disliked disputing, to effect a compromise with my opponent. But, unfortunately, Lamb chose to insinuate (whether sincerely and deliberately I cannot say) that Hazlitt was another Coleridge; and that, allowing for his want of poetic power, he was *non tam impar quam dispar*. This I could not stand. I, whose studies had been chiefly in the field of philosophy, could judge of *that* if I could judge of anything; and certainly I felt entitled to say that anything which Hazlitt might have attempted in philosophy — as his 'Essay on the Principles of Human Action,' and his polemic 'Essay against the Hartleian Theory' — supposing even that these were not derived entirely from Coleridge (as C. used to assert) — could, at the best, be received only as evidences of ingenuity and a natural turn for philosophizing; but, for any systematic education or regular course of reading in philosophy, these little works are satisfactory proofs that Hazlitt had them not. The very language and terminology which belong to philosophy, and are indispensable to its free motion, do not seem to have been known to him. And, whatever gleams of wandering truth might flash at times upon his mind, he was at the mercy of every random impulse; had no principles upon any subject; was eminently one-sided; and viewed all things under the angle which chance circumstances presented,

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never from a central station. Something of this I said, not wishing or hoping to disturb Lamb's opinion, but piqued a little by what seemed to me not so much honor done to Hazlitt as wrong done to Coleridge. Lamb felt, or counterfeited a warmth, that for the moment looked like anger. 'I know not,' he said, 'where you have been so lucky as to find finer thinkers than Hazlitt; for my part, I know of none such. You live, I think, or have lived, in Grasmere. Well, I was once there. I was at Keswick, and all over that wild country; yet none such could I find there. But, stay, there are the caves in your neighborhood, as well as the lakes; these we did not visit. No, Mary,' turning to his sister, 'you know we didn't visit the caves. So, perhaps, these great men live there. Oh! yes, doubtless, they live in the caves of Westmoreland. But you must allow for us poor Londoners. Hazlitt serves for *our* purposes. And in this poor, little, inconsiderable place of London, he is one of our very prime thinkers. But certainly I ought to have made an exception in behalf of the philosophers in the caves.' And thus he ran on, until it was difficult to know whether to understand him in jest or earnest. However, if he felt any vexation, it was gone in a moment; and he showed his perfect freedom from any relic of irritation, by reading to me one or two of his own beautiful compositions — particularly 'The Three Graves.' Lamb read remarkably well. There was rather a defect of vigor in his style of reading; and it was a style better suited to passages of tranquil or solemn movement, than to those of tumultuous passion. But his management of the pauses was judicious, his enunciation very distinct, his tones melodious and deep, and his cadences well executed. The book from which he read, was a folio manuscript, in which he had gathered together

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a number of gems, either his own, or picked up at random from any quarter, no matter how little in the sunshine of the world, that happened to strike his fancy. Amongst them was one which he delighted to read to his friends, as well on account of its real beauty, as because it came from one who had been unworthily treated and so far resembled himself. It was a sonnet of Lord Thurlow, a young poet of those days, who has, I believe, been long dead. I know not whether there is anything besides of equal value amongst this noble writer's works; but assuredly the man who could have written this one sonnet, was no fair subject for the laughter which saluted him on his public appearance as an author. It was a sonnet on seeing some birds in a peculiar attitude by the side of Lacken Water. And the sentiment expressed was thankfulness to nature for her bounty in scattering instruction everywhere, and food for meditation, far transcending in value, as well as in extent, all the teaching of the schools. But the point of the whole, which peculiarly won Lamb's approbation, was the way in which the poet had contrived to praise the one fountain of knowledge without disparaging the other. Accordingly, Lamb used always to solicit the hearer's attention, by reading it twice over, to that passage —

> 'There need not schools, nor the Professor's chair,
> *Though these be good,* to' ——

This sudden turning aside to disclaim any blame of the one power, because he was proclaiming the all-sufficiency of the other, delighted Lamb, as a peculiarly graceful way of expressing the catholic charity which becomes a poet. For it is a maxim to which Lamb often gave utterance, (see, for instance, his letters to Bernard Barton,) that the genial effect of praise or admiration is

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robbed of its music, and untuned, by founding it upon some blame or harsh disparagement of a kindred object. If blame be right and called for, then utter it boldly; but do not poison the gracious charities of intellectual love and reverence, when settling upon grand objects, nor sully the brightness of those objects, by forcing the mind into a remembrance of something that cannot be comprehended within the same genial feelings. No maxim could better display the delicacy and purity of Lamb's childlike spirit of love, to which it was a disturbance and a torture even to be reminded that there was anything existing that was legitimately a subject for a frown or a scowl.

About this time it was — the time, viz., from 1821 to 1825 — that Lamb first, to my knowledge, fell into the habit of sleeping for half an hour or so after dinner. These occasions exhibited his countenance in its happiest aspect; his slumbers were as tranquil as those of the healthiest infant; and the serene benignity of his features became, in those moments, as I have heard many persons remark, absolutely angelic. That was the situation for an artist to have chosen, in order to convey an adequate impression of his countenance. The portrait of him, prefixed to Serjeant Talfourd's book, is far from being a good likeness; it has the air of a Venetian senator, and far more resembles Mr. Hamilton Reynolds, the distinguished wit, dressed for an evening party, than Charles Lamb. The whole-length sketch is better; but the nose appears to me much exaggerated in its curve.

With respect to Lamb's personal habits, much has been said of his intemperance; and his biographer justly remarks, that a false impression prevails upon this subject. In eating, he was peculiarly temperate; and, with respect to drinking, though his own admirable wit, (as in that

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delightful letter to Mr. Carey, where he describes himself, when confided to the care of some youthful protector, as 'an old reprobate Telemachus consigned to the guidance of a wise young Mentor') — though, I say, his own admirable wit has held up too bright a torch to the illumination of his own infirmities, so that no efforts of pious friendship could now avail to disguise the truth, yet it must not be forgotten — 1st, That we are not to imagine Lamb's frailty in this respect habitual or deliberate — he made many powerful resistances to temptation; 2dly, he often succeeded for long seasons in practising entire abstinence; 3dly, when he *did* yield to the mingled temptation of wine, social pleasure, and the expansion of his own brotherly heart, that prompted him to entire sympathy with those around him, (and it cannot be denied that, for any one man to preserve an absolute sobriety amongst a jovial company, wears too much the churlish air of playing the spy upon the privileged extravagances of festive mirth) — whenever this *did* happen, Lamb never, to my knowledge, passed the bounds of an agreeable elevation. He was joyous, radiant with wit and frolic, mounting with the sudden motion of a rocket into the highest heaven of outrageous fun and absurdity; then bursting into a fiery shower of puns, chasing syllables with the agility of a squirrel bounding amongst the trees, or a cat pursuing its own tail; but, in the midst of all this stormy gaiety, he never said or did anything that could by possibility wound or annoy. The most noticeable feature in his intoxication, was the suddenness with which it ascended to its meridian. Half a dozen glasses of wine taken during dinner — for everybody was encouraged, by his sunshiny kindness, to ask *him* to take wine — these, with perhaps one or two after dinner, sufficed to complete his inebriation to the crisis of sleep; after awaking from

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which, so far as I know, he seldom recommenced drinking. This sudden consummation of the effects was not, perhaps, owing to a weaker, (as Serjeant Talfourd supposes,) but rather to a more delicate and irritable system, than is generally found amongst men. The sensibility of his organization was so exquisite, that effects which travel by separate stages with most other men, in him fled along the nerves with the velocity of light. He had great merit in his frequent trials of abstinence; for the day lost its most golden zest, when he had not the genial evening on which to fasten his anticipations. True, his mornings were physically more comfortable upon this system; but then, unfortunately, that mode of pleasure was all reaped and exhausted in the act of enjoyment, whilst the greater pleasure of anticipation, *that* (as he complained himself) was wanting unavoidably, because the morning unhappily comes at the wrong end of the day; so that you may indeed look back to it as something which you have lost, through the other hours of the day; but you can never look forward to it as something which is coming.

It is for ever to be regretted that so many of Lamb's jests, repartees, and pointed sayings, should have perished irrecoverably; and from their fugitive brilliancy, (which, as Serjeant Talfourd remarks, often dazzled too much to allow of the memory coolly retracing them some hours afterwards;) it is also to be regretted that many have been improperly reported. One, for instance, which had been but half told to his biographer, was more circumstantially and more effectually related thus, in my hearing, at Professor Wilson's, by Dr. Bowring, soon after the occasion. It occurred at Mr. Coleridge's weekly party at Highgate. Somebody had happened to mention that letter of Dr. Pococke, upon the Arabic translation of Grotius De Veritate Fidei Christ., in which he exposes the

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want of authority for the trite legend of Mahomet's pigeon, and justly insists upon the necessity of expunging a fable so certain to disgust learned Mussulmans, before the books were circulated in the East. This occasioned a conversation generally, upon the Mahometan creed, theology, and morals; in the course of which, some young man, introduced by Edward Irving, had thought fit to pronounce a splendid declamatory eulogium upon Mahomet and all his doctrines. This, as a pleasant extravagance, had amused all present. Some hours after, when the party came to separate, this philo-Mahometan missed his hat, upon which, whilst a general search for it was going on, Lamb, turning to the stranger, said — 'Hat, sir! — your hat! Don't you think you came in a turban?' The fact that the hat *was* missing, which could not have been anticipated by Lamb, shows his readiness, and so far improves the Serjeant's version of the story.

Finally, without attempting, in this place, any elaborate analysis of Lamb's merits, (which would be no easy task,) one word or two may be said generally, about the position he is entitled to hold in our literature, and, comparatively, in European literature. His biographer thinks that Lamb had more points of resemblance to Professor Wilson, than to any other eminent person of the day. It would be presumptuous to dismiss too hastily any opinion put forward by the author of 'Ion;' otherwise, I confess, that, for my own part, knowing both parties most intimately, I cannot perceive much closer resemblance than what must always be found between two men of genius; whilst the differences seem to me radical. To notice only two points, Professor Wilson's mind is, in its movement and style of feeling, eminently diffusive — Lamb's discontinuous and abrupt. Professor Wilson's humor is broad, overwhelming, riotously opulent — Lamb's is minute, deli-

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cate, and scintillating. In one feature, though otherwise as different as possible, Lamb resembles Sir Walter Scott — viz., in the dramatic character of his mind and taste. Both of them recoiled from the high ideality of such a mind as Milton's; both loved the mixed standards of the world as it is — the dramatic standards in which good and evil are intermingled; in short, that class of composition in which a *human* character is predominant. Hence, also, in the great national movements, and the revolutionary struggles, which, in our times, have gone on in so many interesting parts of the world, neither Sir Walter Scott nor Lamb much sympathized, nor much affected to sympathize, with the aspirations after some exaltation for human nature by means of liberty, or the purification of legal codes or of religious creeds. They were content with things as they are; and, in the dramatic interest attached to these old realities, they found sufficient gratification for all their sensibilities. In one thing, upon consideration, there *does* strike me, some resemblance between Lamb and Professor Wilson — viz., in the absence of affectation, and the courageous sincerity which belong to both; and also, perhaps, as Serjeant Talfourd has remarked, in the comprehensiveness of their liberality towards all, however opposed to themselves, who have any intellectual distinctions to recommend them.

But, recurring to the question I have suggested of Lamb's general place in literature, I shall content myself with indicating my own views of that point, without, however, pausing to defend them. In the literature of every nation, we are naturally disposed to place in the highest rank those who have produced some great and colossal work — a 'Paradise Lost,' a 'Hamlet,' a 'Novum Organum' — which presupposes an effort of intellect, a comprehensive grasp, and a sustaining power, for its

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original conception, corresponding in grandeur to that effort, different in kind, which must preside in its execution. But, after this highest class, in which the power to conceive and the power to execute are upon the same scale of grandeur, there comes a second, in which brilliant powers of execution, applied to conceptions of a very inferior range, are allowed to establish a classical rank. Every literature possesses, besides its great national gallery, a cabinet of minor pieces, not less perfect in their polish, possibly more so. In reality, the characteristic of this class is elaborate perfection — the point of inferiority is not in the finishing, but in the compass and power of the original creation, which (however exquisite in its class) moves within a smaller sphere. To this class belong, for example, 'The Rape of the Lock,' that finished jewel of English literature; 'The Dunciad,' (a still more exquisite gem;) 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' (in its earlier part;) in German, the 'Luise' of Voss; in French — what? Omitting some others that might be named, above all others, the Fables of La Fontaine. He is the pet and darling, as it were, of the French literature. Now, I affirm that Charles Lamb occupies a corresponding station in his own literature. I am not speaking (it will be observed) of kinds, but of degrees in literary merit; and Lamb I hold to be, as with respect to English literature, that which La Fontaine is with respect to French. For, though there may be little resemblance otherwise, in this they agree, that both were wayward and eccentric humorists; both confined their efforts to short flights; and both, according to the standards of their several countries, were occasionally, and, in a lower key, poets. The brutal 'Tales' of La Fontaine do not merit to be considered in such an estimate; for they are simply vulgar and obscene jokes thrown into a metrical version;

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and are never treated, as indeed they rarely could be treated, poetically. The 'Fables'* are a work of more pretension; and throughout the works of La Fontaine there is an occasional felicity in the use of conversational phrases and conversational forms. But, if any reader would wish to see the difference between an inspired writer and a merely *naïf* writer of unusual cleverness — if he would wish to see the magical effects that may be produced upon the simplest incidents by a truly poetic treatment — I would recommend to his notice the fable of the oak and the broom, as told by Wordsworth, with one on the same subject by La Fontaine. In the one fable, such a soul is introduced beneath the ribs of what else are lifeless symbols, that, instead of a somewhat comic effect, the reader is not surprised to find a pensive morality breathing from the whole, and a genuine pathos attained, though couched in symbolic images. But in La Fontaine we find, as usual, levity in the treatment, levity in the result, and his highest attainment lying in the *naïveté* or picturesque raciness of his expressions.

Wordsworth, however, it will be said, is not Lamb. No; but Lamb, although upon a lower scale, has something of the same difference in point of feeling; and his impulses, like those of Wordsworth, are derived from the depths of

* By the way, it has been made a matter of some wonder in the annals of literature, why La Fontaine was amongst the very few eminent writers of that age who did not bask in the court sunshine; and La Harpe, with many others, fancies that his 'Tales' excluded him. But there is no wonder at all to those who are acquainted with his 'Fables.' The ludicrous picture which he constantly presents of courts, and courtiers, and royalty — in treating many of those fables which relate to the lion, &c. — must have confounded and mortified the pompous scenical Louis XIV. more than the most audacious acts of rebellion; and could not have been compensated by the hollow formality of a few stilted dedicatory addresses.

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nature, not from the surfaces of manners. We need not, indeed, wonder at the profounder feeling, and the more intense, as well as consistent originality of Lamb, when we contrast his character, disposition, life, and general demeanor, as I have here endeavored to sketch them, with what we know of La Fontaine, viewed under the same aspects. Not only was La Fontaine a vicious and heartless man, but it may be said of him, with perfect truth, that his whole life was a lie, and a piece of hollow masquerading. By some accident, he had gained the character of an absent man; and, for the sake of sustaining this distinction, with the poor result of making sport for his circle, he committed extravagances which argue equal defect of good sense and sincere feeling in him who was the actor, and in those who accredited them. A man who could seriously affect not to recognise his own son, and to put questions about him as about a stranger, must have been thoroughly wanting in truth of character. And we may be assured, that no depth of feeling in any walk of literature or poetry ever grew upon the basis of radical affectation. The very substratum of Lamb's character, as I have said before, lay in the most intense hostility to affectation. This, however, touches the *quality* of their social merits; and at present I am merely concerned with the *degree;* having selected La Fontaine as that one amongst the French classics who best expresses by analogy the true position and relative rank which the voice of posterity will assign to Charles Lamb in the literature of his own country. His works — I again utter my conviction — will be received as amongst the most elaborately finished gems of literature; as cabinet specimens which express the utmost delicacy, purity, and tenderness of the national intellect, together with the rarest felicity of finish and expression, although it may be the province of other

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modes of literature to exhibit the highest models in the grander and more impassioned forms of intellectual power. Such is my own intimate conviction; and, accordingly, I reckon it amongst the rarest accidents of good fortune which have gilded my literary experience, that, although residing too often at a vast distance from the metropolis to benefit by my opportunities so much as I desired, yet, by cultivating those which fell naturally in my way at various periods, but, most of all, at that period when I may consider my judgment to have been maturest, I reaped so much delight from that intercourse, and so far improved it into a fraternal familiarity, as to warrant me in assuming the honorable distinction of having been a friend of Charles Lamb.*

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* Among the prominent characteristics of Lamb, I know not how it is that I have omitted to notice the peculiar emphasis and depth of his courtesy. This quality was in him a really chivalrous feeling, springing from his heart, and cherished with the sanctity of a duty. He says somewhere, in speaking of himself, under the mask of a third person, whose character he is describing, that, in passing a servant girl even at a street crossing, he used to take off his hat. Now, the *spirit* of Lamb's gallantry would have prompted some such expression of homage, though the customs of the country would not allow it to be *literally* fulfilled; for the very reason that would prompt it — viz., in order to pay respect — since the girl would, in such a case, suppose a man laughing at her. But the instinct of his heart was — to think highly of female nature, and to pay a real homage (not the hollow demonstration of outward honor, which a Frenchman calls his 'homage,' and which is really a mask for contempt) to the sacred *idea* of pure and virtuous womanhood. The one sole case I remember in which Lamb was betrayed into — not discourtesy — no, that could not be — but into a necessity of publicly professing a hostile feeling, was in the letter (now we may say *celebrated* letter) to Mr. Southey. To this, however, he was driven, not by any hostile feeling towards Southey, but simply by a feeling too animated of sympathy with those who happened to be on questions of public interest hostile to Southey. Lamb, it must be remembered, was — that is, he called himself — a dissenter. Was he such in reality? — Not at all. So far from adopting the distinctions of his religious party, he was not even thoroughly aware of them. But with Lamb it happened, as

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with many another man, though careless of the distinctions which bound him to a party, still he was in profession faithful to his party, as a principle of honor. I know many men at this day, who, if left to choose a form of religion — left unfettered by old family connections — would much prefer connecting themselves with the Church of England. But they are restrained and kept loyal to their section of dissent, not by religious considerations, but by worldly honor; the appealing look of the clergyman, resting perhaps his influence one half upon old household recollections — upon the father whom he counselled, the grandfather he prayed with. Such look, such recollections, who could resist — who ought to resist? The only plan is this: when the old minister dies — in the interregnum — whilst as yet the new minister is not — bolt, cut and run. Lamb's situation was difficult; Southey assures us that he knew himself to be wrong: he did not. *Your penitent* Lamb was for the ear of Southey — he never meant it for the world.

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CHAPTER V.

WALLADMOR.

Now let me pass to a part of my London literary life, interesting in its circumstances; and a part it was which interested Charles Lamb, though I doubt whether he ever went so far in his interest as to look into the book which records my share in the affair. This affair had thus far a general interest, that it was undoubtedly the most complete hoax that ever can have been perpetrated. The circumstances are these: — After the Author of 'Waverley' had for a considerable succession of years delighted the world with one or two novels annually, the demand for Waverley novels came to be felt as a periodical craving all over Europe; just as, in the case of Napoleon, some bloody battle by land or by sea was indispensable, after each few months' interval, to pacify the public taste for blood, long irritated by copious gratification. Now it happened in 1823 that no Waverley novel was in readiness, or likely to be in readiness for the Leipsic fair at Michaelmas. Upon which a cry arose amongst the German booksellers — *Forge one!* 'Presumptuous enough *that*,' the reader will say. Doubtless. However, the thing was done. A German, and (to better the case) a German of ultra-dulness, set to work upon a novel. He called it 'Walladmor' — a name, by the way, to be accented not upon the penultimate, 'Walládmor,' but upon the ante-

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penultimate or first syllable — viz., 'Wálladmor,' as appears from the old rhymes connected with the tale — *e. g.*

> 'When blackmen storm the outer door,
> Grief shall be over at Walladmor;'

where all would be spoiled, if the accent were thrown on the penultimate. Well, this book, — this 'Walladmor,' — made its appearance in the German language, not as what it really was, — a German novel, written by a German novelist — but as a translation from an English original of Sir Walter Scott. In this character it appeared at Leipsic; in this character it was instantly dispersed over the length and breadth of Germany; and in this character it crossed the sea to London. I must here stop to mention, that other tricks had been meditated upon Sir Walter: and I will venture to say, that, sooner or later, one of these tricks will be tried. In a country like England, where (by means of our exquisite organization through newspapers, &c., and our consequent unity of feeling) an author may acquire a more intense popularity, and more rapidly, than he ever can upon the continent, there will always be a motive for pirating such an author, or for counterfeiting him, beyond what is ever likely to exist upon the continent. In Sir Walter Scott's case, it is true, there was a mystery which added greatly to the popularity. But still it strikes me, that, simply from the unifying powers at work amongst ourselves, more intense popularity will continually arise in this country than can elsewhere. The everlasting reverberation of a name from a dense population, furnished with the artificial means for prolonging and repeating the echoes, must lead to a result quite inconceivable amongst the non-conducting and frittered population of Germany. There will, therefore,

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arise in the course of the next century, continual temptations for repeating the trick of counterfeiting, and also that other trick meditated upon Sir Walter (or rather upon the house of Constable) which I am going to mention. — It had been much agitated* in Germany, and I

* This was a question almost sure to be suggested, if it were only by the intense book-trade interest that had gradually connected itself with the priority of importation. and the priority of translation, on any occasion of a Waverley novel. Bribes were offered by commission for the furtive transmission of proof-sheets from the Edinburgh press; expresses were kept sleeping in boots and spurs, to forward the earliest copies; translators were pre-occupied by retaining fees; for instance, Lindau, Methusalem, Muller. Dr. Spieker, Lotz, Von Halem, and many others; and between these translators, the most furious races were run — all in order to insure an earlier entrance into the market; for, though Leipsic, in its half-yearly fairs, was the general market, still, in a special call like this, there were extraordinary means of getting into circulation. Hence, and from a competition so burning, it may be readily supposed, that many errors would creep into the translations; and especially where imperfect parts of volumes happened to be transmitted; of which there is an amusing instance mentioned by the German author of 'Walladmor,' in his dedication to Sir Walter Scott: — 'Ah, Sir Walter! did you but know to what straits the poor German translator of a Walter-Scottish novel is reduced, you would pardon greater liberties than any I have taken. *Ecoutez.* First of all, comes the publisher, and cheapens a translator in the very cheapest market of translation-jobbers that can be supposed likely to do any justice to the work. Next come the sheets, dripping wet from the Edinburgh press, with or without sense and connection, just as chance may order it. Nay, it happens not unfrequently that, if a sheet should chance to end with one or two syllables of an unfinished word, we Germans are obliged to translate this first instalment of a future meaning; and, by the time the next sheet arrives with the syllables in arrear, we first learn into what confounded scrapes we have fallen, by guessing and translating at haphazard. *Nomina sunt odiosa:* else — but I shall content myself with reminding the public of the well known and sad mishap which occurred in the translation of Kenilworth. This is sufficiently notorious. Another is more recent — I will relate it: — The sheet, as it was received from Edinburgh, closed unfortunately thus: — "*To save himself from these disasters, he became an agent of Smith-;*" and we all translated — "*Um sich ans diesen trübseligkeitan zu erreten wurde er agent bei einem*

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believe also in France, whether — if a translation were made of a Waverley novel into a foreign language, and afterwards that translation (German suppose, or French) were translated back into English by a person who had never seen the original, and who consequently would give a sufficient coloring of difference to the style — whether, I say, that retranslation might not be lawfully introduced into England, and lawfully sustain itself as a saleable commodity in the character of a foreign book.

Meantime, whilst this suggestion was under debate — a suggestion which applied entirely to the case of a true Waverley novel — one bookseller hit upon another more directly applying to the present case of September, 1824, the unexpected case of no Waverley novel offering to appear. He, therefore, this enterprising bibliopole, Her Herbig of Berlin, resolved to have one forged; and without delay he hired the man that should forge it. Well, this forgery was perpetrated; and, the better to hoax the German public, in three volumes. London it reached on a certain day in the autumn of 1824, towards the close of September or of October, I really forget which; but this I remember, that there was barely a space of forty-eight hours for reading and reviewing the book, a book of a thousand pages, before the literary journals of the month

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Schmiedemeister;" that is, *he became foreman to a blacksmith.* Now, sad it is to tell what followed. We had dashed at it, and we waited in trembling hope for the result. Next morning's post arrived, and showed that all Germany had been basely betrayed by a catch-word of Mr. Constable's. For the next sheet took up the imperfect catch-word thus: — "*field matches,* (*i. e.* Smithfield matches,) *or marriages contracted for money:*" and the German sentence should have been cobbled and put to rights as follows: — Er negociste, um sich aufzuhelfin, die sogenannten Smithfields heirathen, &c. *Should* have been, I say; but, wo is me, for all Germany! it was too late; the translated sheet had been already finished off with the blacksmith in it — Heaven confound him! And the blacksmith is there to this day, and cannot be ejected.'

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would be closed of necessity against further contributions. One copy only had been received as yet in London; and this was bespoke for Sir Walter Scott. Somebody's interest, I know not whose, procured it for me, as a man who read German fluently: and within the time allowed, I had completed a tolerably long article for the *London Magazine*. It may be supposed that reading the book was quite out of the question, for one who had, in so brief a time, to write a long paper upon it. The course I pursued, therefore, was this:—I drew up a somewhat rhetorical account of the German hoax; explained the drift of it; and then gave a translation of such passages as had happened to strike me. To the best of my remembrance, I selected three: one, the opening chapter, which introduces the two heroes of the novel, as sole survivors of a steamer which had blown up in the Bristol Channel, swimming in company, then engaged in a murderous conflict for a barrel, and finally reconciled, by mutual acts of generosity, into giving each other all the assistance within their power. This was a truly German scene. The next was a snow storm amongst the mountains of Merionethshire, and not without some interest. The last described the committal of a principal person in the tale to an ancient castle, (Walladmor,) on a charge of treason. And, in this case, the incidents moved amongst picturesque circumstances of mountain scenery, with the adjuncts of storm and moonlight, not ill described.

How it could have happened, I do not know, but it *did* happen, that I had stumbled by pure accident upon almost every passage in the whole course of the thousand pages which could be considered tolerable. Naturally enough, the publishers of the *London Magazine* were encouraged by these specimens to hope well of the book; and, at their request, I undertook to translate it. Confident in my

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powers of rapid translation, I undertook even to keep up with the printer; three sheets, or forty-eight pages, I made sure of producing daily; at which rate, a volume would be finished in a week, and three weeks might see the whole work ready for the public. Never was there such a disappointment, or such a perplexity. Not until the printing had actually commenced, with arrangements for keeping several compositors at work, did I come to understand the hopeless task I had undertaken. Such rubbish — such 'almighty' nonsense, (to speak *transatlanticè*,) — no eye has ever beheld as nine hundred and fifty, to say the very least, of these thousand pages. To translate them was perfectly out of the question; the very devils and runners of the press would have mutinied against being parties to such atrocious absurdities. What was to be done? Had there been any ready means for making the publishers aware of the case in its whole extent, probably I should have declined the engagement; but, as this could not be accomplished without reading half a volume to them, I thought it better to pursue the task; mending and retouching into something like common sense wherever that was possible; but far more frequently forging new materials, in pure despair of mending the old; and reconstructing, very nearly, the whole edifice from the foundation upwards. And hence arose this singular result: that, without any original intention to do so, I had been gradually led by circumstances, to build upon this German hoax a second and equally complete English hoax. The German 'Walladmor' professed to be a translation from the English of Sir Walter Scott; my 'Walladmor' professed to be a translation from the German; but, for the reasons I have given, it was no more a translation from the German than the German from the English. It must be supposed that

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writing into the framework of another man's story fearfully cramped the freedom of my movements. There were absurdities in the very conduct of the story and the development of the plot, which could not always be removed without more time than the press allowed me; for I kept the press moving, though slowly; namely, at the rate of half-a-sheet (eight pages) a day. In some instances, I let the incidents stand, and contented myself with rewriting every word of the ridiculous narration, and the still more ridiculous dialogues. In others, I recomposed even the incidents. In particular, I was obliged to put in a new catastrophe. Upon this it struck me, that certain casuistical doubts might arise, as to the relation which I held to my German principal, which doubts I thus expressed, in a dedication to that person: —

'Having some intention, sir, of speaking rather freely of you and your German translation, in a postscript to the second volume of my English one, I am shy of sending a presentation copy to Berlin. Neither you nor your publisher might relish all that I may take it into my head to say. Yet, as books sometimes travel far, if you should ever happen to meet with mine knocking about the world, in Germany, I would wish you to know that I have endeavored to make you what amends I could, for any little affront which I meditate in that postscript, by dedicating my English translation to yourself. You will be surprised to observe that your three corpulent German volumes, have collapsed into two English ones, of rather consumptive appearance. The English climate, you see, does not agree with them; and they have lost flesh as rapidly as Captain le Harnois, in chapter the eighth. We have a story in England, trite enough here, and a sort of philosophic commonplace, like Buridan's ass, but possibly unknown in Germany; and, as it is pertinent to the

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case between us, I will tell it, the more so as it involves a methaphysical question, and such questions, you know, go up from all parts of Europe, to you people in Germany, as "the courts above." Sir John Cutler had a pair of silk stockings, which his housekeeper, Dolly, darned for a long term of years with worsted; at the end of which time, the last gleam of silk had vanished, and Sir John's *silk* stockings were found to have degenerated into *worsted*. Now, upon this a question arose amongst the metaphysicians, whether Sir John's stockings retained (or, if not, at what precise period they lost) their personal identity. The moralists again were anxious to know, whether Sir John's stockings could be considered the same "accountable" stockings from first to last. The lawyers put the same question in another shape, by demanding whether any felony which Sir John's stockings could be supposed to have committed in youth, might legally be the subject of indictment against the same stockings when superannuated; whether a legacy left to the stockings in their first year, could be claimed by them in their last; and whether the worsted stockings could be sued for the debts of the silk stockings. Some such questions will arise, I apprehend, upon your German "Walladmor," as darned by myself. But here, my good sir, stop a moment. I must not have you interpret the precedent of Sir John and Dolly too strictly. Sir John's stockings were originally of silk, and darned with worsted; but don't you conceit *that* to be the case here. No, no! I flatter myself the case between us is just the other way. Your *worsted* stockings it is that I have darned with silk; and the relations which I and Dolly bear to you and Sir John are precisely inverted. What could induce you to dress good St. David in a threadbare suit, it passes my skill to guess — it is enough that I am sure it would

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give general disgust; and, therefore, I have not only made him a present of a new coat, but have also put a little embroidery upon it. And I really think I shall astonish the good folks in Merionethshire by my account of that saint's festival. In my young days, I wandered much in that beautiful shire, and other shires which lie contiguous; and many a kind thing was done to me in poor men's cottages, which, to my dying day, I shall never be able to repay individually. Hence, as occasions offer, I would seek to make my acknowledgments generally to the country. Upon Penmorfa sands, I once had an interesting adventure — and I have accordingly commemorated Penmorfa. To the little town of Machynleth, I am indebted for various hospitalities; and I think Machynleth will acknowledge itself indebted to me exclusively for its mayor and corporation. Others there are besides, in that neighborhood, both towns and men, that, when they shall read *my* St. David's Day, will hardly know whether they are standing on their head or their heels. As to the Bishop of Bangor, of those same days, I owed his Lordship no particular favor, and, therefore, you will observe, I have now taken my vengeance on that see for ever, by making it do suit and service to the house of Walladmor. But enough of St. David's Day. There are some other little changes which I have been obliged to make, in deference to the taste of this country. In the case of Captain le Harnois, it appears to me that, from imperfect knowledge of the English language, you have confounded the words "sailor" and "tailor;" for you make the Captain talk very much like the latter. There is, however, a great deal of difference in the habits of the two animals, according to our English naturalists; and, therefore, I have retouched the Captain, and curled his whiskers. I have also taken the liberty of curing Miss

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Walladmor of an hysterical affection. What purpose it answered, I believe you would find it hard to say; and I am sure she has enough to bear without that. Your geography, let me tell you, was none of the best, and I have brushed it up myself. Something the public will bear: topographical sins are venial in a romance; and no candid people look very sharply after the hydrography of a novel. But still, my dear sir, it *did* strike me, that the case of a man's swimming on his back from Bristol to the Isle of Anglesea, was a little beyond the privilege granted by the most *maternal* public. No, pardon me, that rather exceeds the public swallow. Besides, it would have exposed us both to illiberal attacks in the *Quarterly Review*, from Mr. Barrow of the Admiralty, your weak point being his strong one; and particularly, because I had taken liberties with Mr. Croker,* who is a colleague and old crony of his. Your chronology, by the way, was also damaged; but that has gone to the watchmaker's, and it is now regulated, so as to go as well as the Horse-Guards. Now, finally, "Mine dear sare," could you not translate me back into German, and darn me as I have darned you? But you must not "sweat" me down in the same ratio that I have "sweated" you; for, if you do that, I fear that my "dimensions will become invisible to any thick sight" in Germany, and I shall "present no mark" to the critical enemy. Darn me into two portly volumes; and, then, perhaps, I will translate you back again into English, and darn you with silk so hyperlustrous, that were Dolly and Professor Kant to rise from the dead, Dolly should grow jealous of me, and the professor confess himself more thoroughly puzzled and confounded, as to

* I had called him *Ally Croker*, in allusion to an old joke of Mr. Southey, Mr. Croker having used the word *ally* and *allies* in his poem of 'Talavera,' *more Hibernico*, with the accent on the first syllable.

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the matter of personal identity, by the final "Walladmor," than ever he had been by the Cutlerian stockings. *Jusqu' au revoir*, my dear principal, hoping that you will soon invest me with that character, in relation to yourself; and that you will then sign, as it is now *my* turn to sign — Your obedient (but not very *faithful*) Translator.'

It will be observed that, in this dedication, I have not ventured to state the nature of my alterations, in their whole extent. This I could not do in prudence; for, though I should really have made myself a party to a gross fraud upon the public purse, by smuggling into circulation a load of hideous trash, under the momentary attraction of its connection with Sir Walter Scott, (an attraction which might have sold one edition before its nature was discovered) — though I could not do this, and therefore took the only honorable course open to me in so strange a dilemma, — viz., that of substituting a readable, and, at all events, not dull novel, for the abortion I had been betrayed into sanctioning; yet it might too much have repelled readers, if I had frankly stated beforehand, the extent to which I had been compelled to recompose this German hoax. In a postscript, however, when the reader might be supposed to have finished the book, I spoke a little more plainly. And, as there will be some amusement to many readers in what I said — which (owing to the very imperfect publication * of the book) is,

* The system of quack-puffing, applied to books, and, above all, the artifice of seducing a reader into the reading of paragraphs which else he would shun, by holding out false expectation in the heading — all this, in common with other literary men, I deem disgraceful to literature. Such practices lower an honorable profession to the level of a mechanic trade. But the system of soliciting public attention by plain unvarnished advertisements — that is rendered indispensable to the publication of a book. That wanting, (as in 'Walladmor') the book is not published.

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in reality, nearly 'as good as manuscript'—I shall here quote a part of it:—'*E quovis lingo non fit Mercurius*,' or, to express this Roman proverb by our own homely one—"*You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.*" Certainly it is difficult to do so, and none can speak to that more feelingly than myself: but not impossible, as I hope that *my* "Walladmor" will show compared with the original. This is a point which, on another account, demands a word or two of explanation, as the reader will else find it difficult to understand upon what principle of translation three thick-set German volumes can have shrunk into two English ones of somewhat meagre proportion.'—I then go on to explain, that the German *pseudo-Scott* had chosen *three*, not because his matter naturally extended so far, but on the principle of exact imitation. 'A Scotch novel from the Constable press, and *not* in three volumes, would have been detected *in limine* as a hoax and a counterfeit. Such a novel would be as ominous and prodigious as "double Thebes;" as perverse as drinking a man's health *with two times two*, (which, in fact, would be an insult;) as palpably fraudulent as a subscription of £99 19*s.*, (where it would be clear that some man had pocketed a shilling;) and as contrary to all natural history as that twenty-seven tailors should make either more or fewer than the cube-root of that number. What may be the occult law of the Constable press, which compels it into these three-headed births, might be hard to explain. Mr. Kant himself, with all his subtlety, could never make up his mind in his Königsberg lectures on that subject—why it is that no man thinks of presenting a lady with a service of twenty-three cups and saucers, though evidently she is just as likely to have a party of twenty-three people as twenty-four. Nay, if the reader himself were to make such a

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present to an English grand jury, when the party never *could* be more than twenty-three, he would infallibly order a service of twenty-four, though he must, in his own conscience, be aware that the twenty-fourth cup and saucer was a mere Irish bull, and a disgusting pleonasm; a twenty-fourth grand-jury man being as entirely a chimera as the "abstract lord mayor" of Scriblerus on a 30th of February. Not only *without* a reason therefore, but even *against* reason, people have a superstitious regard to certain numbers; and Mr. Constable has a right to *his* superstition, which, after all, may be the classical one — that *three* happens to be the number of the Graces.'

This compliment, by the way, was delicate enough to merit an acknowledgment from the Constable press. So much then being settled — that, as a *primâ facie* step towards sustaining the hoax, *three* must be the number of the volumes — I then went on to say: — 'But what if there was not time to complete so many volumes so as to appear at the Leipsic fair? In that case, two men must do what one could not. Yet, as the second man could not possibly know what his leader was about, he must, of necessity, produce his under stratum without the least earthly reference to the upper; his thorough bass without relation to the melodies in the treble. This was awkward; and, to meet the difficulty, it appears to me, that the upper man said to the lower, "Write me a huge heap of speeches upon politics and Welsh genealogy, write me loads of rubbish, astrological, cosmological "and diabolical," (as Mrs. Malaprop has it:) have these ready. I, meantime, have two characters (Sir Morgan and Mr. Dulberry the Radical) upon whom I can hang all that you write. You make hooks enough — I'll make eyes; and, what between my men and your speeches, my eyes and

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your hooks, it's odds but we make a very pretty novel." Such I conceive to have been the pleasant arrangement upon which the machinery was worked, so as to fetch up the way before the Michaelmas Fair began. And thus were two (perhaps three) men's labors dovetailed into one German romance. *Aliter non fit, Avite, liber.* When the rest of the rigging was complete, the politics, genealogy, astrology, &c., were mounted as "royals" and "sky-scrapers," the ship weighed, and soon after made Leipsic and London under a press of sail.' Then, having protested that this trash was absolutely beyond hope, and that I should have made myself a party to the author's folly or his knavery by translating it, I offered, however, in the case of my reader's complaining of these large retrenchments, to translate the whole for a 'consideration;' to cast it upon the complainant's premises, and to shovel it into the coal-cellar, or any more appropriate place. But thus, I explained, did in fact arise the difference in size, as well as quality, between the German and the English 'Walladmor.' And henceforwards I shall think the better of the German author as well as myself so long as I live: of him for an unrivalled artist of sows' ears, and of myself for a very respectable manufacturer of silk purses.

Thus much to account for my omissions; which, however, some readers may facetiously regard, far from needing apology, as my only merits; and *that* would be as cruel as Lessing's suggestion to an author for his table of errata — '*Apropos* of errata, suppose you were to put your whole book into the list of errata.' More candid readers, I am inclined to hope, will blame me for not having made even larger alterations in the book; and *that* would be a flattering critique, as it must presume that I could have improved it; and compliment never

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wears so delightful an aspect as when it takes the shape of blame. The truth is, I *have* altered; yes, altered and altered, until I became alarmed. The ghost of Sir John Cutler, of Sir John's stockings, of Sir Francis Drake's ship — nay, of Jason's ship, and older ghosts even than these — all illustrating the same perplexing question, began to haunt me. Metaphysical doubts fell upon me, and I came to fear that, if to a new beginning and a new catastrophe, I were to add a new middle, possibly there might came some evil-minded person who might say that I also was a hoaxer, an English hoaxer building upon a German hoaxer. Then I paused. But still I have gone too far; for it is a most delicate operation to take work out of another man's loom and put work in; joinings and sections will sometimes appear; colors will not always match. In general I would request the reader to consider himself indebted to me for anything he may find particularly good; and, in any case, to load my unhappy 'principal' with the blame of everything that is wrong. Coming upon any passage which he thinks superlatively bad, let him be assured that I had no hand in it. Should he change his opinion upon it, I may be disposed to reconsider whether I had not some hand in it. This will be the more reasonable in him, as the critics will 'feel it their duty' (oh! of course, 'their duty') to take the very opposite course. However, if he reads German, my German 'Walladmor' is at his service, and he can judge for himself. Not reading German, let him take my word, when I apply to the English 'Walladmor' the spirit of the old bull: —

> 'Had you seen but these roads before they were made,
> You would lift up your eyes, and bless Marshal Wade.'

Here closed my explanations; but, as a *l'envoy* or *quod*

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bene vortat to the whole concern, I added something — a *valediction* and an *ave* in the same breath — which, for the sake of the Spenserian allusion, many people will relish; and even yet I pique myself upon it as a felicitous passage. It began with a quotation; and this quotation, as pretty broadly I hinted, was from myself — myself as the reviewer in the *London Magazine*. Thus it was: —

'A friend of mine' (so we all say when we are looking out for some masquerade dress under which to praise ourselves, or to abuse some dear friend,) 'a friend of mine has written a very long review (or analysis rather) of the German "Walladmor," in a literary journal of the metropolis. He concludes with the following passage, which I choose to quote on account of the graceful allusion it contains, partly also because it gives me an opportunity for trying *my* hand at an allusion to the same romantic legend: — "Now, turning back from the hoaxer to the hoax," we shall conclude with this proposition: — All readers of Spenser must know that the true Florimel lost her girdle, which, they will remember, was found by Sir Satyrane, and was adjudged by a whole assemblage of knights to the false Florimel, although it did not quite fit her. She — viz., the snowy or false Florimel —

> 'exceedingly did fret;
> And, snatching from his hand half angrily
> The belt again, about her body 'gan it tie.
> Yet nathemore would it her body fit;
> Yet natheless to her, as her due right,
> It yielded was by them that judged it.'
>
> *Faery Queene*, b. iv. c. 5.

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CHAPTER VI.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

It was, I think, in the month of August, but certainly in the summer season, and certainly in the year 1807, that I first saw this illustrious man, the largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and the most comprehensive, in my judgment, that has yet existed amongst men. My knowledge of him as a man of most original genius began about the year 1799. A little before that time Mr. Wordsworth had published the first edition (in a single volume) of the 'Lyrical Ballads,' at the end or the beginning of which was placed Mr Coleridge's poem of the *Ancient Mariner*, as the contribution of an anonymous friend. It would be directing the reader's attention too much to myself, if I were to linger upon this, the greatest event in the unfolding of my own mind. Let me say in one word, that, at a period when neither the one nor the other writer was valued by the public, — both having a long warfare to accomplish of contumely and ridicule before they could rise into their present estimation, — I found in these poems 'the ray of a new morning,' and an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds, teeming with power and beauty, as yet unsuspected amongst men. I may here mention that, precisely at the same time, Professor Wilson, about the same age as myself, received the same startling and profound impres-

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sions from the same volume. With feelings of reverential interest, so early and so deep, pointing towards two contemporaries, it may be supposed that I inquired eagerly after their names. But these inquiries were self-baffled, the same deep feelings which prompted my curiosity, causing me to recoil from all casual opportunities of pushing the inquiry, as too generally lying amongst those who gave no sign of participating in my feelings; and, extravagant as it may seem, I revolted with as much hatred from coupling my question with any occasion of insult to the persons whom it respected, as a primitive Christian from throwing frankincense upon the altars of Cæsar, or a lover from giving up the name of his beloved to the coarse license of a Bacchanalian party. It is laughable to record for how long a period my curiosity in this particular was self-defeated. Two years passed before I ascertained the two names. Mr. Wordsworth published *his* in the second and enlarged edition of the work — and for Mr. Coleridge's I was 'indebted' to a private source; but I discharged that debt ill, for I quarrelled with my informant for what I considered his profane way of dealing with a subject so hallowed in my own thoughts. After this I searched east and west, north and south, for all known works or fragments of the same authors. I had read, therefore, as respects Mr. Coleridge, the Allegory which he contributed to Mr. Southey's Joan of Arc. I had read his fine Ode, entitled *France*, his Ode to the Duchess of Devonshire, and various other contributions, more or less interesting, to the two volumes of the 'Anthology,' published at Bristol, about 1799–1800, by Mr. Southey; and, finally, I had, of course, read the small volume of poems which passed under his name: these, however, as a juvenile and immature work, had in general greatly disappointed me.

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Meantime, it had crowned the interest which to me invested his name, — that about the year 1804 or 1805, I had been informed by a gentleman from the English lakes, who knew him as a neighbor, that he had for some time applied his whole mind to metaphysics and psychology, — which happened to be my own absorbing pursuit. From 1803 to 1808, I was a student at Oxford; and on the first occasion, when I could conveniently have sought for a personal knowledge of one whom I contemplated with so much admiration, I was met by a disgusting assurance that he had quitted England, and was then residing at Malta in the quality of secretary (and occasionally as treasurer) to the Governor. I began to inquire about the best route to Malta; but, as any route at that time promised an inside place in a French prison, I reconciled myself to waiting; and at last, happening to visit a relative at the Bristol Hot-wells, in the summer of 1807, I had the pleasure to hear that Mr. Coleridge was not only once more upon English ground, but within forty and odd miles of my own station. In that same hour I mounted and bent my way to the south; and before evening reaching a ferry on the river Bridgewater, at a village called, I think, Stogursey, (*i. e.* Stoke de Courcy, by way of distinction from some other Stoke.) I crossed it, and a few miles further attained my object, — viz., the little town of Nether Stowey, amongst the Quantock hills. Here I had been assured that I should find Mr. Coleridge, at the house of his old friend Mr. Poole. On presenting myself, however, to that gentleman, I found that Coleridge was absent at Lord Egmont's, an elder brother (by the father's side) of Mr. Percival the minister, assassinated five years after; and as it was doubtful whether he might not then be on the wing to another friend's in the town of Bridgewater, I consented willingly, until his motions

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should be ascertained, to stay a day or two with this Mr. Poole, — a man on his own account well deserving a separate notice; for, as Coleridge afterwards remarked to me, he was almost an ideal model for a useful member of Parliament. He was a stout, plain-looking farmer, leading a bachelor life, in a rustic old-fashioned house; the house, however, upon further acquaintance, proving to be amply furnished with modern luxuries, and especially with a good library, superbly mounted in all departments bearing at all upon political philosophy; and the farmer turning out a polished and liberal Englishman, who had travelled extensively, and had so entirely dedicated himself to the service of his humble fellow-countrymen, the hewers of wood and drawers of water in this southern region of Somersetshire, that for many miles round he was the general arbiter of their disputes, the guide and counsellor of their daily lives; besides being appointed executor and guardian to his children by every third man who died in or about the town of Nether Stowey.

The first morning of my visit, Mr. Poole was so kind as to propose, knowing my admiration of Wordsworth, that we should ride over to Alfoxton, — a place of singular interest to myself, as having been occupied in his unmarried days by that poet, during the minority of Mr. St. Aubyn, its present youthful proprietor. At this delightful spot, the ancient residence of an ancient English family, and surrounded by those ferny Quantock hills which are so beautifully sketched in the poem of *Ruth*, Wordsworth, accompanied by his sister, had passed the whole of the interval between leaving the University, (Cambridge,) and the period of his final settlement amongst his native lakes of Westmoreland, except only one year spent in France,

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some months in North Germany, and a space, I know not how long, spent at Race Down in Dorsetshire.

Returning late from this interesting survey, we found ourselves without company at dinner; and, being thus seated tête-à-tête, Mr. Poole propounded the following question to me, which I mention, because it furnished me with the first hint of a singular infirmity besetting Coleridge's mind: — 'Pray, my young friend, did you ever form any opinion, or rather — did it ever happen to you to meet with any rational opinion or conjecture of others, upon that most irrational dogma of Pythagoras about beans? You know what I mean: that monstrous doctrine in which he asserts that a man might as well, for the wickedness of the thing, eat his own grandmother as meddle with beans.' 'Yes,' I replied: 'the line is in the Golden Verses. I remember it well.'

P. — 'True: now our dear excellent friend Coleridge, than whom God never made a creature more divinely endowed, yet strange it is to say, sometimes steals from other people, just as you or I might do; I beg your pardon, — just as a poor creature like myself might do, that sometimes have not wherewithal to make a figure from my own exchequer: and the other day, at a dinner party, this question arising about Pythagoras and his beans, Coleridge gave us an interpretation, which, from his manner, I suspect to have been not original. Think, therefore, if you have anywhere read a plausible solution.'

'I have: and it was in a German author. This German, understand, is a poor stick of a man, not to be named on the same day with Coleridge: so that, if it should appear that Coleridge has robbed him, be assured that he has done the scamp too much honor.'

P. — 'Well: what says the German?'

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'Why, you know the use made in Greece of beans in voting and balloting? Well: the German says that Pythagoras speaks symbolically; meaning that electioneering, or, more generally, all interference with political intrigues, is fatal to a philosopher's pursuits and their appropriate serenity. Therefore, says he, follower of mine, abstain from public affairs as you would from parricide.'

P. — 'Well then, Coleridge *has* done the scamp too much honor: for, by Jove, that is the very explanation he gave us!'

Here was a trait of Coleridge's mind, to be first made known to me by his best friend, and first published to the world by me, the foremost of his admirers! But both of us had sufficient reasons: — Mr. Poole knew that, stumbled on by accident, such a discovery would be likely to impress upon a man as yet unacquainted with Coleridge a most injurious jealousy with regard to all he might write; whereas, frankly avowed by one who knew him best, the fact was disarmed of its sting; since it thus became evident that where the case had been best known and most investigated, it had not operated to his serious disadvantage. On the same argument, to forestall, that is to say, other discoverers who would make a more unfriendly use of the discovery, and also, as matters of literary curiosity, I shall here point out a few of Coleridge's unacknowledged obligations, detected by myself in a very wide course of reading.

1. The hymn to Chamouni is an expansion of a short poem in stanzas, upon the same subject, by Frederica Brun, a female poet of Germany, previously known to the world under her maiden name of Münter. The mere framework of the poem is exactly the same, — an appeal to the most impressive features of the regal mountain,

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(Mont Blanc,) citing them to proclaim their author: the torrent, for instance, is required to say, by whom it had been arrested in its headlong raving, and stiffened, as by the petrific mace of Death, into everlasting pillars of ice; and the answer to these impassioned apostrophes is made by the same choral burst of rapture. In mere logic, therefore, and even as to the choice of circumstances, Coleridge's poem is a translation. On the other hand, by a judicious amplification of some topics, and by its far deeper tone of lyrical enthusiasm, the dry bones of the German outline have been created by Coleridge into the fulness of life. It is not, therefore, a paraphrase, but a recast of the original. And how was this calculated, if frankly avowed, to do Coleridge any injury with the judicious?

2. A more singular case of Coleridge's infirmity is this: — In a very noble passage of 'France' a fine expression or two occur from 'Sampson Agonistes.' Now to take a phrase or an inspiriting line from the great fathers of poetry, even though no marks of quotation should be added, carries with it no charge of plagiarism. Milton is presumed to be as familiar to the ear as nature to the eye; and to steal from him as impossible as to appropriate, or sequester to a private use, some 'bright particular star.' And there is a good reason for rejecting the typographical marks of quotation: they break the continuity of the passion, by reminding the reader of a printed book; on which account Milton himself, (to give an instance,) has not marked the sublime words, 'tormented all the air,' — as borrowed; nor has Wordsworth, in applying to an unprincipled woman of commanding beauty the memorable expression, 'a weed of glorious feature,' — thought it necessary to acknowledge it as originally belonging to Spenser. Some dozens

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of similar cases might be adduced from Milton. But Mr. Coleridge, in describing France as

'Her footsteps insupportably advancing,'

not satisfied with omitting the marks of acknowledgment, thought fit positively to deny that he was indebted to Milton. Yet who could forget that semi-chorus in the 'Sampson,' where the 'bold Ascalonite' is described as having 'fled from his lion ramp?' Or who, that was not in this point liable to some hallucination of judgment, would have ventured on a public challenge (for virtually it was that) to produce from the 'Sampson,' words so impossible to be overlooked as those of 'insupportably advancing the footsteps?' The result, as I remember, was, that one of the critical journals placed the two passages in juxta-position, and left the reader to his own conclusions with regard to the poet's veracity. But in this instance, it was common sense rather than veracity which the facts impeach.

3. In the year 1814 I happened to be amusing myself, by reading, in their chronological order, the great classical circumnavigations of the earth; and, coming to Shelvocke, I met with a passage to this effect: — That Hatley, his second captain, (*i. e.* lieutenant,) being a melancholy man, was possessed by a fancy that some long season of foul weather was due to an albatross which had steadily pursued the ship; upon which he shot the bird, but without mending their condition. There at once I saw the germ of the 'Ancient Mariner;' and I put a question to Coleridge accordingly. Could it have been imagined that he would see cause utterly to disown so slight an obligation to Shelvocke? Wordsworth, a man of stern veracity, on hearing of this, professed his inability to understand Coleridge's meaning; the fact being

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notorious, as he told me, that Coleridge had derived, from the very passage I had cited, the original hint for the action of the poem; though it is very possible, from something which Coleridge said, on another occasion, that, before meeting a fable in which to embody his ideas, he had meditated a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes.

4. All these cases amount to nothing at all as cases of plagiarism, and for that reason expose the more conspicuously that obliquity of feeling which could seek to decline the very slight acknowledgments required. But now I come to a case of real and palpable plagiarism; yet that too of a nature to be quite unaccountable in a man of Coleridge's attainments. It is not very likely, that this particular case will soon be detected; but others will. Yet who knows? Eight hundred or a thousand years hence, some cursed reviewer may arise, who having read the *Biographia Literaria* of Coleridge, will afterwards read the Miscellaneous Philosophical Essays* of Schelling, the great Bavarian professor — a man in some respects worthy to be Coleridge's assessor; and he will then make a singular discovery. In the 'Biographia Literaria' occurs a dissertation upon the reciprocal relations of the *Esse* and the *Cogitare;* and an attempt is made, by inverting the postulates from which the argument starts, to show how each might arise as a product, by an intelligible genesis, from the other. It is a subject, which, since the time of Fichte, has much occupied the German methaphysicians; and many thousands of essays have been written on it, of which many hundreds have been read by many tens of persons.

* I forget the exact title, not having seen the book since 1823, and then only for one day; but I believe it was *Schelling's Kleine Philosophische Werke.*

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Coleridge's essay, in particular, is prefaced by a few words, in which, aware of his coincidence with Schelling, he declares his willingness to acknowledge himself indebted to so great a man, in any case where the truth would allow him to do so; but in this particular case, insisting on the impossibility that he could have borrowed arguments which he had first seen some years after he had thought out the whole hypothesis *proprio marte*. After this, what was my astonishment, to find that the entire essay from the first word to the last, is a *verbatim* translation from Schelling, with no attempt in a single instance to appropriate the paper, by developing the arguments or by diversifying the illustrations! Some other obligations to Schelling of a slighter kind, I have met with in the *Biographia Literaria;* but this was a barefaced plagiarism, which could in prudence have been risked only by relying too much upon the slight knowledge of German literature in this country, and especially of that section of the German literature. Had then Coleridge any need to borrow from Schelling? Did he borrow *in forma pauperis?* Not at all: — there lay the wonder. He spun daily and at all hours, for mere amusement of his own activities, and, from the loom of his own magical brain, theories more gorgeous by far, and supported by a pomp and luxury of images, such as Schelling — no, nor any German that ever breathed, not John Paul — could have emulated in his dreams. With the riches of El Dorado lying about him, he would condescend to filch a handful of gold from any man whose purse he fancied; and in fact reproduced in a new form, applying itself to intellectual wealth, that maniacal propensity which is sometimes well known to attack enormous proprietors and *millionaires* for acts of petty larceny. The last Duke of Anc—— could not abstain from exercising his furtive

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mania upon articles so humble as silver spoons; and it was the daily care of a pious daughter, watching over the good name of her father, to have his pockets searched by a confidential valet, and the claimants of the purloined articles traced out.

Many cases have crossed me in life of people, otherwise not wanting in principle, who had habits, or at least hankerings, of the same kind. And the phrenologists, I believe, are well acquainted with the case, its signs, its progress, and its history. Dismissing, however, this subject, which I have at all noticed, only that I might anticipate and (in old English) that I might *prevent* the uncandid interpreter of its meaning, I will assert finally, that, after having read for thirty years in the same track as Coleridge, — that track in which few of any age will ever follow us, such as German metaphysicians, Latin schoolmen, thaumaturgic Platonists, religious Mystics, — and having thus discovered a large variety of trivial thefts, I do, nevertheless, most heartily believe him to have been as entirely original in all his capital pretensions, as any one man that ever has existed; as Archimedes in ancient days, or as Shakspeare in modern. Did the reader ever see Milton's account of the rubbish contained in the Greek and Latin fathers? or did he ever read a statement of the monstrous chaos with which an African Obeah man stuffs his enchanted scarecrows? or, to take a more common illustration, did he ever amuse himself by searching the pockets of a child — three years old, suppose, when buried in slumber after a long summer's day of out-a-door's intense activity? I have done this; and, for the amusement of the child's mother, have analyzed the contents, and drawn up a formal register of the whole. Philosophy is puzzled, conjecture and hypothesis are confounded, in the attempt to explain the law

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of selection which *can* have presided in the child's labors: stones remarkable only for weight, old rusty hinges, nails, crooked skewers, stolen when the cook had turned her back, rags, broken glass, tea-cups having the bottom knocked out, and loads of similar jewels, were the prevailing articles in this *procés verbal*. Yet, doubtless, much labor had been incurred, some sense of danger, perhaps, had been faced, and the anxieties of a conscious robber endured, in order to amass this splendid treasure. Such in value were the robberies of Coleridge; such their usefulness to himself or anybody else: and such the circumstances of uneasiness under which he had committed them. I return to my narrative.

Two or three days had slipped away in waiting for Coleridge's re-appearance at Nether Stowey, when suddenly Lord Egmont called upon Mr. Poole, with a present for Coleridge: it was a canister of peculiarly fine snuff, which Coleridge now took profusely. Lord Egmont, on this occasion, spoke of Coleridge in the terms of excessive admiration, and urged Mr. Poole to put him upon undertaking some great monumental work, that might furnish a sufficient arena for the display of his various and rare accomplishments; for his multiform erudition on the one hand, for his splendid power of theorizing and combining large and remote notices of facts on the other. And he suggested, judiciously enough, as one theme which offered a field at once large enough and indefinite enough to suit a mind that could not show its full compass of power, unless upon very plastic materials, — a History of Christianity, in its progress and in its chief divarications into Church and Sect, with a continual reference to the relations subsisting between Christianity and the current philosophy; their occasional connections or approaches, and their constant mutual repulsions. 'But, at

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any rate, let him do something,' said Lord Egmont; 'for at present he talks very much like an angel, and he does nothing at all.' Lord Egmont, I understood from everybody, to be a truly good and benevolent man; and, on this occasion, he spoke with an earnestness which agreed with my previous impression. Coleridge, he said, was now at the prime of his powers — uniting something of youthful vigor, with sufficient experience of life; with the benefit beside of vast meditation, and of reading unusually discursive. No man had ever been better qualified to revive the heroic period of literature in England, and to give a character of weight to the philosophic erudition of the country upon the continent. 'And what a pity,' he added, 'if this man were, after all, to vanish like an apparition; and you, I, and a few others, who have witnessed his grand *bravuras* of display, were to have the usual fortune of ghost-seers, in meeting no credit for any statements that we might vouch on his behalf!'

To pursue my narrative. It now appeared that Lord Egmont's carriage had, some days before, conveyed Coleridge to Bridgewater, with a purpose of staying one single day at that place, and then returning to Mr. Poole's. From the sort of laugh with which Lord Egmont taxed his own simplicity, in having confided at all in the stability of any Coleridgian plan, I now gathered that procrastination in excess, was, or had become, a marking feature in Coleridge's daily life. Nobody who knew him ever thought of depending on any appointment he might make: spite of his uniformly honorable intentions, nobody attached any weight to his assurances *in re futura:* those who asked him to dinner or any other party, as a matter of course sent a carriage for him, and went personally or by proxy to fetch him; and, as to letters, unless the address were in some female hand that commanded his

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affectionate esteem, he tossed them all into one general *dead-letter bureau*, and rarely, I believe, opened them at all. Bourrienne mentions a mode of abridging the trouble attached to a very extensive correspondence, by which infinite labor was saved to himself and to Bonaparte, when commanding in Italy. Nine out of ten letters, supposing them letters of business with official applications of a special kind, he contends, answer themselves: in other words, time alone must soon produce events which virtually contain the answer. On this principle the letters were opened periodically, after intervals, suppose of six weeks: and, at the end of that time, it was found that not many remained to require any further more particular answer. Coleridge's plan, however, was shorter: he opened none, I understood, and answered none. At least such was his habit at that time. But on that same day, all this, which I heard now for the first time, and with much concern, was fully explained: for already he was under the full dominion of opium, as he himself revealed to me, and with a deep expression of horror at the hideous bondage, in a private walk of some length, which I took with him about sunset.

Lord Egmont's information, and the knowledge now gained of Coleridge's habits, making it very uncertain when I might see him in my present hospitable quarters, I immediately took my leave of Mr. Poole, and went over to Bridgewater. I had received directions for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting; and, in riding down a main street of Bridgewater, I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing, and gazing about him, a man whom I shall describe. In height he might seem to be about five feet eight; (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height;)

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his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess, which mixed with their light, that I recognised my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more; and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie; for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn door, and advanced close to him, before he had apparently become conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my own name, first awoke him: he started, and, for a moment, seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation; for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but simple perplexity, and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position amongst daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious. The hospitable family, with whom he was domesticated, were distinguished for their amiable manners and enlightened understandings: they were descendants from Chubb, the philosophic writer, and bore the same name. For Coleridge, they all testified deep affection and esteem — sentiments in which the whole town of Bridgewater seemed to share; for in the evening, when the heat of the day had declined, I walked out with him; and rarely, perhaps never, have I seen a person so much interrupted in one hour's space as Coleridge, on this occasion, by the courteous attentions of young and old.

All the people of station and weight in the place, and

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apparently all the ladies, were abroad to enjoy the lovely summer evening; and not a party passed without some mark of smiling recognition; and the majority stopping to make personal inquiries about his health, and to express their anxiety that he should make a lengthened stay amongst them. Certain I am, from the lively esteem expressed towards Coleridge, at this time, by the people of Bridgewater, that a very large subscription might, in that town, have been raised to support him amongst them, in the character of a lecturer, or philosophical professor. Especially, I remarked, that the young men of the place manifested the most liberal interest in all that concerned him; and I can add my attestation to that of Mr. Coleridge himself, when describing an evening spent amongst the enlightened tradesmen of Birmingham, that nowhere is more unaffected good sense exhibited, and particularly nowhere more elasticity and *freshness* of mind, than in the conversation of the reading men in manufacturing towns. In Kendal, especially, in Bridgewater, and in Manchester, I have witnessed more interesting conversations, as much information, and more natural eloquence in conveying it, than usually in literary cities, or in places professedly learned. One reason for this is, that in trading towns the time is more happily distributed; the day given to business, and active duties — the evening to relaxation; on which account, books, conversation, and literary leisure are more cordially enjoyed: the same satiation never can take place, which too frequently deadens the genial enjoyment of those who have a surfeit of books, and a monotony of leisure. Another reason is, that more simplicity of manner may be expected, and more natural picturesqueness of conversation, more open expression of character in places, where people have no previous name to support. Men, in trad-

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ing towns, are not afraid to open their lips, for fear they should disappoint your expectations, nor do they strain for showy sentiments, that they may meet them. But elsewhere, many are the men who stand in awe of their own reputation: not a word which is unstudied, not a movement in the spirit of natural freedom, dare they give way to; because it might happen that on review something would be seen to retract or to qualify — something not properly planned and chiselled, to build into the general architecture of an artificial reputation. But to return: —

Coleridge led me to a drawing-room, rang the bell for refreshments, and omitted no point of a courteous reception. He told me that there would be a very large dinner party on that day, which, perhaps, might be disagreeable to a perfect stranger; but, if not, he could assure me of a most hospitable welcome from the family. I was too anxious to see him under all aspects, to think of declining this invitation. And these little points of business being settled, — Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that had been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, and suddenly recovers its volume of waters, and its mighty music, — swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical, that it was possible to conceive. What I mean by saying that his transitions were 'just,' is by way of contradistinction to that mode of conversation which courts variety by means of *verbal* connections. Coleridge, to many people, and often I have heard the complaint, seemed to wander; and he seemed then to wander the most, when in fact his resistance to the wandering instinct

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was greatest, — viz., when the compass, and huge circuit, by which his illustrations moved, travelled farthest into remote regions, before they began to revolve. Long before this coming-round commenced, most people had lost him, and naturally enough supposed that he had lost himself. They continued to admire the separate beauty of the thoughts, but did not see their relations to the dominant theme. Had the conversation been thrown upon paper, it might have been easy to trace the continuity of the links; just as in Bishop Berkeley's Siris,* from a pedestal so low and abject, so culinary, as Tar Water, the method of preparing it, and its medicinal effects, the dissertation ascends, like Jacob's ladder, by just gradations, into the Heaven of Heavens, and the thrones of the Trinity. But Heaven is there connected with earth by the Homeric chain of gold; and being subject to steady examination, it is easy to trace the links. Whereas, in conversation, the loss of a single word may cause the whole cohesion to disappear from view. However, I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic, the most severe, was as inalienable from his modes of thinking, as grammar from his language.

On the present occasion, the original theme, started by myself, was Hartley, and the Hartleian theory. I had carried, as a little present to Coleridge, a scarce Latin pamphlet, *De Ideis*, written by Hartley, about 1746, that is, about three years earlier than the publication of his great work. He had also preluded to this great work, in a little English medical tract upon Joanna Stephens's medicine for the stone; for indeed Hartley was the person

* *Seiris* ought to have been the title, *i. e.* Σειρις, a chain; from this defect in the orthography, I did not in my boyish days perceive, nor could obtain any light upon its meaning.

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upon whose evidence the House of Commons had mainly relied in giving to that same Joanna a reward of £5000 for her idle medicines — an application of public money not without its use, in so far as it engaged men by selfish motives to cultivate the public service, and to attempt public problems of very difficult solution; but else, in that particular instance, perfectly idle, as the groans of three generations since Joanna's era have too feelingly established. It is known to most literary people that Coleridge was, in early life, so passionate an admirer of the Hartleian philosophy, that 'Hartley' was the sole baptismal name which he gave to his eldest child; and in an early poem, entitled 'Religious Musings,' he has characterized Hartley as —

> ——— 'Him,
> Wisest of men, who saw the mimic trains
> Pass in fine surges to the sentient brain.'

But at present, (August, 1807,) all this was a forgotten thing. Coleridge was so profoundly ashamed of the shallow Unitarianism of Hartley, and so disgusted to think that he could at any time have countenanced that creed, that he would scarcely allow to Hartley the reverence which is undoubtedly his due: for I must contend that, waiving all question of the extent to which Hartley would have pushed it, (as though the law of association accounted not only for our complex pleasures and pains, but also might be made to explain the act of ratiocination,) waiving also the physical substratum of nervous vibrations and miniature vibrations, to which he has chosen to marry his theory of association: — all this apart, I must contend that the 'Essay on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations,' stands forward as a specimen almost unique of elaborate theorizing, and a monument of absolute

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beauty, in the perfection of its *dialectic* ability. In this respect it has, to my mind, the spotless beauty, and the ideal proportions of some Grecian statue. However, I confess, that being myself, from my earliest years, a reverential believer in the doctrine of the Trinity, simply because I never attempted to bring all things within the mechanic understanding, and because, like Sir Thomas Brown, my mind almost demanded mysteries, in so mysterious a system of relations as those which connect us with another world, and also because the farther my understanding opened, the more I perceived of dim analogies to strengthen my creed; and because nature herself, mere physical nature, has mysteries no less profound; and because the simplest doctrine of motion rests upon an ultimate fact, which all the wisdom of the schools will never explain; and because that vulgar puzzle of Achilles and the Tortoise never was and never will be cleared up;* and, finally, because I had begun to suspect (what afterwards Coleridge more fully convinced me of) that the unity demanded by the *soi-disant* Unitarian is a chimera and a total blunder, — being, in fact, not unity, but what the schoolmen call *unicity;* for, as they insist,

* So cleared up, I mean, as to make it other than a mystery. Else, in a sense which, leaving a great mystery behind, clears it of contradiction, it was solved satisfactorily to my mind by Mr. Coleridge, — I believe in print; but at any rate in conversation. I had remarked to him that the 'sophism,' as it is usually called, but the difficulty as it should be called, of Achilles and the Tortoise, which had puzzled all the sages of Greece, was, in fact, merely another form of the perplexity which besets decimal fractions, — that, for example, if you throw $\frac{2}{3}$ into a decimal form, it will never terminate, but be .666666, &c., *ad infinitum*. 'Yes,' Coleridge replied; 'the apparent absurdity in the Grecian problem arises thus, — because it assumes the infinite divisibility of *space*, but drops out of view the corresponding infinity of *time*.' There was a flash of lightning, which illuminated a darkness that had existed for twenty-three centuries!

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without previous multitude (meaning by multitude simply plurality) there can be no proper unity; for, else, where is the *union* — where is the *To unitum?*

For these and for many other '*becauses*,' I could not reconcile, with my general reverence for Mr. Coleridge, the fact so often reported to me, that he was a Unitarian. A Unitarian, I often exclaimed, and a philosopher! Nay, it cannot be denied, the profoundest of philosophers! and one destined to sound the intellectual depths, and the depths below depths, beyond any other of the children of men. But, said some Bristol people to me, not only is he a Unitarian — he is also a Socinian. In that case, I replied, I cannot hold him a Christian. I am a liberal man, and have no bigotry or hostile feelings towards a Socinian; but I can never think that man a Christian, who has blotted out of his scheme the very powers by which only the great offices and functions of Christianity can be sustained; neither can I think that any man, though he may make himself a marvellously clever disputant, ever could tower upwards into a very great philosopher, unless he should begin or should end with Christianity. Kant is a dubious exception. Not that I mean to question his august pretensions, so far as they went, and in his proper line. Within his own circle none durst tread but he. But that circle was limited. He was called, by one who weighed him well, the *alles-zermalmender*, the world-shattering Kant. He could destroy — his intellect was essentially destructive. He was the Gog and he was the Magog of Hunnish desolation to the existing schemes of philosophy. He probed them; he showed the vanity of vanities which besieged their foundations, — the rottenness below, the hollowness above. But he had no instincts of creation or restoration within his Apollyon mind; for he had no love, no faith, no

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self-distrust, no humility, no childlike docility; all which qualities belonged essentially to Coleridge's mind, and waited only for manhood and for sorrow to bring them forward.

Who can read without indignation of Kant, that, at his own table, in social sincerity and confidential talk, let him say what he would in his books, he exulted in the prospect of absolute and ultimate annihilation; that he planted his glory in the grave, and was ambitious of rotting for ever! The King of Prussia, though a personal friend of Kant's, found himself obliged to level his state thunders at some of his doctrines, and terrified him in his advance; else, I am persuaded that Kant would have formally delivered Atheism from the Professor's chair, and would have enthroned the horrid Goulish creed, which privately he professed, in the University of Königsberg. It required the artillery of a great King to make him pause. The fact is, that as the stomach has been known, by means of its natural secretion, to attack not only whatsoever alien body is introduced within it, but also (as John Hunter first showed) sometimes to attack itself and its own organic structure; so, and with the same preternatural extension of instinct, did Kant carry forward his destroying functions, until he turned them upon his own hopes and the pledges of his own superiority to the dog — the ape — the worm. But '*exoriare aliquis*,' — and some philosopher, I am persuaded, *will* yet arise; and 'one sling of some victorious arm' (Paradise Lost, b. X.) will yet destroy the destroyer, in so far as he has applied himself to the destruction of Christian hope. For my faith is, that, though a great man may, by a rare possibility, be an infidel, an intellect of the highest order must build upon Christianity. A very clever architect may choose to show his power by building with insufficient

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materials, but the supreme architect must require the very best; because the perfection of the forms cannot be shown but in the perfection of the matter.

On these accounts I took the liberty of doubting, as often as I heard the reports I have mentioned of Coleridge; and I now found that he disowned most solemnly (and I may say penitentially) whatever had been true in these reports. Coleridge told me that it had cost him a painful effort, but not a moment's hesitation, to abjure his Unitarianism, from the circumstance that he had amongst the Unitarians many friends, to some of whom he was greatly indebted for kind offices. In particular he mentioned Mr. Estlin of Bristol, I believe a dissenting clergyman, as one whom it grieved him to grieve. But he would not dissemble his altered views. I will add, at the risk of appearing to dwell too long on religious topics, that on this my first introduction to Coleridge, he reverted with strong compunction to a sentiment which he had expressed in earlier days, upon prayer. In one of his youthful poems, speaking of God, he had said,—

> '——— Of whose all-seeing eye
> Aught to demand were impotence of mind.'

This sentiment he now so utterly condemned, that, on the contrary, he told me, as his own peculiar opinion, that the act of praying was the very highest energy of which the human heart was capable; praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties; and the great mass of worldly men and of learned men, he pronounced absolutely incapable of prayer.

For about three hours he had continued to talk, and in the course of this performance he had delivered many most striking aphorisms, embalming more weight of truth, and separately more deserving to be themselves embalmed

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than any that are on record. In the midst of our conversation, if that can be called conversation which I so seldom sought to interrupt, and which did not often leave openings for contribution, the door opened, and a lady entered. She was in person full and rather below the common height: whilst her face showed, to my eye, some prettiness of rather a commonplace order. Coleridge turned, upon her entrance: his features, however, announced no particular complacency, and did not relax into a smile. In a frigid tone he said, whilst turning to me, 'Mrs. Coleridge:' in some slight way he then presented me to her: I bowed; and the lady almost immediately retired. From this short, but ungenial scene, I gathered, what I afterward learned redundantly, that Coleridge's marriage had not been a very happy one. But let not the reader misunderstand me. Never was there a baser insinuation, viler in the motive, or more ignoble in the manner, than that passage in some lampoon of Lord Byron's, where, by way of vengeance on Mr. Southey, (who was the sole delinquent,) he described both him and Coleridge as having married 'two milliners from Bath.' Everybody knows what is *meant* to be conveyed in that expression, though it would be hard indeed, if, even at Bath, there should be any class under such a fatal curse, condemned so irretrievably, and so hopelessly prejudged — that ignominy must, at any rate, attach, in virtue of a mere name or designation, to the mode by which they gained their daily bread, or possibly supported the declining years of a parent. However, in this case, the whole sting of the libel was a pure falsehood of Lord Byron's. Bath was not the native city, nor at any time the residence of the ladies in question, but Bristol. As to the other word, '*milliners*,' that is not worth inquiring about. Whether they, or any one of their family ever

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did exercise this profession, I do not know: they were at all events too young, when removed by marriage from Bristol, to have been much tainted by the worldly feelings which may beset such a mode of life. But what is more to the purpose, I heard at this time in Bristol, from Mr. Cottle the author, a man of high principle, from his accomplished sisters, from the ladies who had succeeded Mrs. Hannah More in her school, and who enjoyed her entire confidence, as well as from other most respectable residents at Bristol, who had passed their lives in that city, that the whole family of four or five sisters had maintained an irreproachable character, though naturally exposed by their personal attractions to some peril, and to the malevolence of envy. This declaration, which I could strengthen by other testimony equally disinterested, if it were at all necessary, I owe to truth; and I must also add, upon a knowledge more personal, that Mrs. Coleridge was, in all circumstances of her married life, a virtuous wife, and a conscientious mother; and as a mother, she showed at times a most meritorious energy: in particular, I remember that, wishing her daughter to acquire the Italian language, and having, in her retirement at Keswick, no means of obtaining a master, she set to work resolutely under Mr. Southey's guidance, to learn the language herself, at a time of life when such attainments are not made with ease or pleasure: she became mistress of the language in a very respectable extent, and then communicated her new accomplishment to her interesting daughter.

Meantime, I, for my part, owe Mrs. Coleridge no particular civility: and I see no reason why I should mystify the account of Coleridge's life or habits, by dissembling what is notorious to so many thousands of people. An insult once offered by Mrs. Coleridge to a female relative

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of my own, as much superior to Mrs. Coleridge in the spirit of courtesy and kindness, which ought to preside in the intercourse between females, as she was in the splendor of her beauty, would have given me a dispensation from all terms of consideration beyond the restraints of strict justice. My offence was — the having procrastinated in some trifling affair of returning a volume, or a MS.; and during my absence at a distance of four or five hundred miles, Mrs. Coleridge thought fit to write a letter, filled with the most intemperate expressions of anger, addressed to one whom she did not know by sight, and who could in no way be answerable for my delinquencies. I go on, therefore, to say, that Coleridge afterwards made me, as doubtless some others, a confidant in this particular. What he had to complain of, was simply incompatibility of temper and disposition. Wanting all cordial admiration, or indeed comprehension of her husband's intellectual powers, Mrs. Coleridge wanted the original basis for affectionate patience and candor. Hearing from everybody that Coleridge was a man of most extraordinary endowments, and attaching little weight, perhaps, to the distinction between popular talents, and such as by their very nature are doomed to a slower progress in the public esteem, she naturally looked to see at least an ordinary measure of worldly consequence attend upon their exercise.

Now had poor Coleridge been as persevering and punctual as the great mass of professional men, and had he given no reason to throw the *onus* of the different result upon his own different habits, — in that case this result might, possibly and eventually, have been set down to the peculiar constitution of his powers, and their essential non-popularity in the English market. But this trial having never fairly been made, it was natural to impute his

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non-success exclusively to his own irregular application, and his carelessness in forming judicious connections. In circumstances such as these, however, no matter how caused, or how palliated, was laid a sure ground of discontent and fretfulness in any woman's mind, not unusually indulgent, or unusually magnanimous. Coleridge, besides, assured me that his marriage was not his own deliberate act; but was in a manner forced upon his sense of honor, by the scrupulous Southey, who insisted that he had gone too far in his attentions to Miss F——, for any honorable retreat. On the other hand, a neutral spectator of the parties protested to me, that, if ever in his life he had seen a man under deep fascination, and what he would have called desperately in love, Coleridge, in relation to Miss F——, was that man. Be that as it might, circumstances occurred soon after the marriage, which placed all the parties in a trying situation for their candor and good temper. I had a full outline of the situation from two of those who were chiefly interested, and a partial one from a third: nor can it be denied that all the parties offended in point of prudence. A young lady became a neighbor, and a daily companion of Coleridge's walks, whom I will not describe more particularly, than by saying that intellectually she was very much superior to Mrs. Coleridge. That superiority alone, when made conspicuous by its effect in winning Coleridge's regard and society, could not but be deeply mortifying to a young wife. However, it was moderated to her feelings by two considerations, — 1st, That the young lady was much too kind-hearted to have designed any annoyance in this triumph, or to express any exultation; 2d, That no shadow of suspicion settled upon the moral conduct or motives of either party: the young lady was always attended by her brother: she had no personal charms; and it was

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manifest that mere intellectual sympathies, in reference to literature and natural scenery, had associated them in their daily walks.

Still it is a bitter trial to a young married woman to sustain any sort of competition with a female of her own age, for any part of her husband's regard, or any share of his company. Mrs. Coleridge, not having the same relish for long walks or rural scenery, and their residence being, at this time, in a very sequestered village, was condemned to a daily renewal of this trial. Accidents of another kind embittered it still further: often it would happen that the walking party returned drenched with rain; in which case the young lady, with a laughing gaiety, and evidently unconscious of any liberty that she was taking, or any wound that she was inflicting, would run up to Mrs. Coleridge's wardrobe, array herself, without leave asked, in Mrs. Coleridge's dresses, and make herself merry with her own unceremoniousness and Mrs. Coleridge's gravity. In all this, she took no liberty that she would not most readily have granted in return; she confided too unthinkingly in what she regarded as the natural privileges of friendship; and as little thought that she had been receiving or exacting a favor, as, under an exchange of their relative positions, she would have claimed to have conferred one. But Mrs. Coleridge viewed her freedoms with a far different eye: she felt herself no longer the entire mistress of her own house; she held a divided empire; and it barbed the arrow to her womanly feelings, that Coleridge treated any sallies of resentment which might sometimes escape her, as narrow-mindedness: whilst, on the other hand, her own female servant, and others in the same rank of life, began to drop expressions, which alternately implied pity for her as an injured woman, or sneered at her as a very tame one.

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The reader will easily apprehend the situation, and the unfortunate results which it boded to the harmony of a young married couple, without further illustration. Whether Coleridge would not, under any circumstances, have become indifferent to a wife not eminently capable of enlightened sympathy with his own ruling pursuits, I shall not undertake to guess. But doubtless this consummation must have been hastened by a situation which exposed Mrs. Coleridge to an invidious comparison with a more intellectual person; as, on the other hand, it was most unfortunate for Coleridge himself, to be continually compared with one so ideally correct and regular in his business habits as Mr. Southey. Thus was their domestic peace prematurely soured: embarrassments of a pecuniary nature would be likely to demand continual sacrifices; no depth of affection existing, these would create disgust or dissension; and at length, each would believe that their union had originated in circumstances overruling their own deliberate choice.

The gloom, however, and the weight of dejection which sat upon Coleridge's countenance and deportment at this time, could not be accounted for by a disappointment, (if such it were,) to which time must, long ago, have reconciled him. Mrs. Coleridge, if not turning to him the more amiable aspects of her character, was, at any rate, a respectable partner. And the season of youth was now passed. They had been married about ten years; had had four children, of whom three survived; and the interests of a father were now replacing those of a husband. Yet never had I beheld so profound an expression of cheerless despondency. And the restless activity of Coleridge's mind in chasing abstract truths, and burying himself in the dark places of human speculation, seemed to me, in a great measure, an attempt

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to escape out of his own personal wretchedness. At dinner, when a very numerous party had assembled, he knew that he was expected to talk, and exerted himself to meet the expectation. But he was evidently struggling with gloomy thoughts that prompted him to silence, and perhaps to solitude: he talked with effort; and passively resigned himself to the repeated misrepresentations of several amongst his hearers. It must be to this period of Coleridge's life that Wordsworth refers in those exquisite '*Lines* written in my pocket-copy of the Castle of Indolence.' The passage which I mean comes after a description of Coleridge's countenance, and begins in some such terms as these: —

> 'A piteous sight it was to see this man,
> When he came back to us, a wither'd flow'r,' &c.

Withered he was indeed, and to all appearance blighted. At night he entered into a spontaneous explanation of this unhappy overclouding of his life, on occasion of my saying accidentally that a toothache had obliged me to take a few drops of laudanum. At what time or on what motive he had commenced the use of opium, he did not say; but the peculiar emphasis of horror with which he warned me against forming a habit of the same kind, impressed upon my mind a feeling that he never hoped to liberate himself from the bondage. About ten o'clock at night I took leave of him; and feeling that I could not easily go to sleep after the excitement of the day, and fresh from the sad spectacle of powers so majestic already besieged by decay, I determined to return to Bristol through the coolness of the night. The roads, though, in fact, a section of the great highway between seaports so turbulent as Bristol and Plymouth, were as quiet as garden-walks. Once only I passed through the

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expiring fires of a village fair or wake: that interruption excepted, through the whole stretch of forty miles from Bridgewater to the Hot-wells, I saw no living creature, but a surly dog, who followed me for a mile along a park wall, and a man who was moving about in the half-way town of Cross. The turnpike gates were all opened by a mechanical contrivance from a bed-room window; I seemed to myself in solitary possession of the whole sleeping country: — the summer night was divinely calm; no sound, except once or twice the cry of a child as I was passing the windows of cottages, ever broke upon the utter silence; and all things conspired to throw back my thoughts upon the extraordinary person whom I had quitted.

The fine saying of Addison is familiar to most readers, — that Babylon in ruins is not so affecting a spectacle, or so solemn, as a human mind overthrown by lunacy. How much more awful, then, and more magnificent a wreck, when a mind so regal as that of Coleridge is overthrown or threatened with overthrow, not by a visitation of Providence, but by the treachery of his own will, and the conspiracy as it were of himself against himself! Was it possible that this ruin had been caused or hurried forward by the dismal degradations of pecuniary difficulties? That was worth inquiring. — I will here mention briefly that I *did* inquire two days after; and in consequence of what I heard, I contrived that a particular service should be tendered to Mr. Coleridge, a week after, through the hands of Mr. Cottle of Bristol, which might have the effect of liberating his mind from anxiety for a year or two, and thus rendering his great powers disposable to their natural uses. That service was accepted by Coleridge. To save him any feelings of distress all names were concealed; but in a letter written

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by him, about fifteen years after this time, I found that he had become aware of all the circumstances, perhaps through some indiscretion of Mr. Cottle's. A more important question I never ascertained, — viz., whether this service had the effect of seriously lightening his mind. For some succeeding years he did certainly appear to me released from that load of despondency which oppressed him on my first introduction. Grave, indeed, he continued to be, and at times absorbed in gloom; nor did I ever see him in a state of perfectly natural cheerfulness. But as he strove in vain, for many years, to wean himself from his captivity to opium, a healthy state of spirits could not be much expected. Perhaps, indeed, where the liver and other organs had, for so large a period in life, been subject to a continual morbid stimulation, it may be impossible for the system ever to recover a natural action. Torpor, I suppose, must result from continued artificial excitement; and, perhaps, upon a scale of corresponding duration. Life, in such a case, may not offer a field of sufficient extent for unthreading the fatal links that have been wound about the machinery of health, and have crippled its natural play. Meantime, — to resume the thread of my wandering narrative, — on this serene summer night of 1807, as I moved slowly along, with my eyes continually settling upon the Northern constellations, which, like all the fixed stars, by their immeasurable and almost spiritual remoteness from human affairs, naturally throw the thoughts upon the perishableness of our earthly troubles, in contrast with their own utter peace and solemnity, — I reverted, at intervals, to all I had ever heard of Coleridge, and strove to weave it into some continuous sketch of his life. I hardly remember how much I then knew; I

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know but little now — that little I will here jot down upon paper.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the son of a learned clergyman — the vicar of Ottery St. Mary, in the southern quarter of Devonshire. It is painful to mention that he was almost an object of persecution to his mother; why, I could never learn. His father was described to me, by Coleridge himself, as a sort of Parson Adams, being distinguished by his erudition, his inexperience of the world, and his guileless simplicity. I once purchased in London, and, I suppose, still possess, two elementary books on the Latin language by this reverend gentleman; one of them, as I found, making somewhat higher pretensions than a common school grammar. In particular, an attempt is made to reform the theory of the cases; and it gives a pleasant specimen of the rustic scholar's *naiveté*, that he seriously proposes to banish such vexatious terms as the *accusative;* and, by way of simplifying the matter to tender minds, that we should call it, in all time to come, the '*quale-quare-quidditive*' case, upon what incomprehensible principle I never could fathom. He used regularly to delight his village flock, on Sundays, with Hebrew quotations in his sermons, which he always introduced as the 'immediate language of the Holy Ghost.' This proved unfortunate to his successor; he also was a learned man, and his parishioners admitted it, but generally with a sigh for past times, and a sorrowful complaint that he was still far below Parson Coleridge — for that *he* never gave them any 'immediate language of the Holy Ghost.' I presume, that, like the reverend gentleman so pleasantly sketched in St. Ronan's Well, Mr. Coleridge, who resembled that person in his Oriental learning and his simplicity, must also have resembled him in short-sightedness, of which his son used to relate a

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ludicrous instance. Dining in a large party, one day, the modest divine was suddenly shocked by perceiving some part, as he conceived, of his own snowy shirt emerging from a part of his habiliments, which we shall suppose to have been his waistcoat. It was *not* that; but for decorum we shall so call it. The stray portion of his pupposed tunic was admonished of its errors by a forcible thrust back into its proper home; but still another *limbus* persisted to emerge, or seemed to persist, and still another, until the learned gentleman absolutely perspired with the labor of re-establishing order. And, after all, he saw with anguish, that some arrears of the snowy indecorum still remained to reduce into obedience. To this remnant of rebellion he was proceeding to apply himself — strangely confounded, however, at the obstinacy of the insurrection — when the mistress of the house, rising to lead away the ladies from the table, and all parties naturally rising with her, it became suddenly apparent to every eye, that the worthy Orientalist had been most laboriously stowing away, into the capacious receptacles of his own habiliments, the snowy folds of a lady's gown, belonging to his next neighbor; and so voluminously, that a very small portion of it, indeed, remained for the lady's own use; the natural consequence of which was, of course, that the lady appeared almost inextricably yoked to the learned theologian, and could not in any way effect her release, until after certain operations upon the Vicar's dress, and a continued refunding and rolling out of snowy mazes upon snowy mazes, in quantities which, at length, proved too much for the gravity of the company. Inextinguishable laughter arose from all parties, except the erring and unhappy doctor, who, in dire perplexity, continued still refunding with all his might, until he had paid up the last arrears of his long debt, and thus put an

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end to a case of distress more memorable to himself and his parishioners than any '*quale-quare-quidditive*' case that probably had ever perplexed his learning.

In his childish days, and when he had become an orphan, S. T. Coleridge was removed to the heart of London, and placed on the great foundation of Christ's Hospital. He there found himself associated, as a school-fellow, with several boys destined to distinction in after life, and especially with one who, if not endowed with powers equally large and comprehensive, had, however, genius not less original or exquisite than his own — the inimitable Charles Lamb. But, in learning, Coleridge outstripped all competitors, and rose to be the Captain of the school. It is indeed a most memorable fact to be recorded of a boy, that, before completing his fifteenth year, he had translated the Greek Hymns of Synesius into English anacreontic verse. This was not a school task, but a labor of love and choice; to appreciate which, it is necessary to recall the dark philosophy which constitutes the theme of Synesius. Before leaving school, Coleridge had an opportunity of reading the sonnets of Bowles, which so powerfully impressed his poetic sensibility, that he made forty transcripts of them with his own pen, by way of presents to youthful friends. From Christ's Hospital, by the privilege of his station at school, he was transferred to Jesus College, Cambridge. It was here, no doubt, that his acquaintance began with the philosophic system of Hartley, for that eminent person had been a Jesus man. Frend also, the mathematician, of heretical memory, belonged to that College, and was probably contemporary with Coleridge. What accident, or imprudence, carried him away from Cambridge before he had completed the usual period of study, or (I believe) taken his degree, I never heard. He had certainly won

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some distinction as a scholar, having obtained the prize for a Greek ode in Sapphic metre, of which the sentiments (as he observes himself) were better than the Greek. Porson was accustomed, meanly enough, to ridicule the Greek *lexis* of this ode, which was to break a fly upon the wheel. The ode was clever enough for a boy; but to such skill in Greek as could have enabled him to compose with critical accuracy, Coleridge never made pretensions. He had, however, a far more philosophic insight into much of the structure of that language than Porson had, or could have comprehended.

The incidents of Coleridge's life about this period, and some account of a heavy disappointment in love, which probably it was that carried him away from Cambridge, are to be found embodied (with what modifications I know not) in the novel of 'Edmund Oliver,' written by the late Charles Lloyd. It is well known that, in a frenzy of unhappy feeling at the rejection he met with from the lady of his choice, Coleridge enlisted as a private into a dragoon regiment. He fell off his horse on several occasions, but, perhaps, not more than raw recruits are apt to do when first put under the riding-master. But Coleridge was naturally ill framed for a good horseman. He is also represented in 'Edmund Oliver,' as having found peculiar difficulty or annoyance in grooming his horse. But the most romantic incident in that scene of his life was in the circumstances of his discharge. It is said (but I vouch for no part of the story) that Coleridge, as a private, mounted guard at the door of a room in which his officers happened to give a ball. Two of them had a dispute upon some Greek word or passage when close to Coleridge's station. He interposed his authentic decision of the case. The officers stared as though one of their own horses had sung 'Rule Britannia;' questioned him;

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heard his story ; pitied his misfortune ; and, finally, subscribed to purchase his discharge. Not very long after this, Coleridge became acquainted with the two Wedgwoods, both of whom, admiring his fine powers, subscribed to send him into North Germany, where, at the university of Göttingen, he completed his education according to his own scheme. The most celebrated professor whose lectures he attended, was the far-famed Blumenbach, of whom he continued to speak through life with almost filial reverence. Returning to England, he attended Mr. Thomas Wedgwood, as a friend, throughout the afflicting and anomalous illness which brought him to the grave. It was supposed by medical men that the cause of Mr. Wedgwood's continued misery was a stricture of some part in the intestines (the colon, it was believed.) The external symptoms were torpor and defective irritability, together with everlasting restlessness. By way of some relief to this latter symptom, Mr. Wedgwood purchased a travelling carriage, and wandered up and down England, taking Coleridge as his companion. And, as a desperate attempt to rouse and irritate the decaying sensibility of his system, I have been assured by a surviving friend, that Mr. Wedgwood at one time opened a butcher's shop, conceiving that the affronts and disputes to which such a situation would expose him, might act beneficially upon his increasing torpor. This strange expedient served only to express the anguish which had now mastered his nature : it was soon abandoned ; and this accomplished but miserable man soon sank under his sufferings. What made the case more memorable was the combination of worldly prosperity which had settled upon this gentleman. He was rich, young, generally beloved, distinguished for his scientific attainments, publicly honored for patriotic

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services, and had before him, when he first fell ill, every prospect of a splendid and most useful career.

By the death of Mr. Wedgwood, Coleridge succeeded to a regular annuity of £75, which that gentleman had bequeathed to him. The other Mr. Wedgwood granted him an equal allowance. Now came his marriage, his connection with politics and political journals, his residence in various parts of Somersetshire, and his consequent introduction to Mr. Wordsworth. In his politics, Mr. Coleridge was most sincere and most enthusiastic. No man hailed with profounder sympathy the French Revolution; and though he saw cause to withdraw his regard from many of the democratic zealots in this country, and even from the revolutionary interest as it was subsequently conducted, he continued to worship the original revolutionary cause in a pure Miltonic spirit; and he continued also to abominate the policy of Mr. Pitt in a degree which I myself find it difficult to understand. The very spirited little poem of 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter,' who are supposed to meet in conference, to describe their horrid triumphs, and then to ask in a whisper *who* it was that unchained them, to which each in turn replies,

'Letters four do form his name!'

expresses his horror of Mr. Pitt personally in a most extravagant shape, but merely for the purpose of poetic effect; for he had no real unkindness in his heart towards any human being; and I have often heard him disclaim the hatred which is here expressed for Mr. Pitt, as he did also very elaborately and earnestly in print. Somewhere about this time, Coleridge attempted, under Sheridan's countenance, to bring a tragedy upon the stage of Drury Lane; but his prospect of success, as I once heard or read, was suddenly marred by Mr. Sheridan's inability to

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sacrifice what he thought a good jest. One scene presented a cave with streams of water weeping down the sides; and the first words were, in a sort of mimicry of the sound, 'Drip, drip, drip!' Upon which Sheridan repeated aloud, 'Drip, drip, drip! — why, God bless me, there's nothing here but *dripping*;' and so arose a chorus of laughter amongst the actors fatal to the probationary play.

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CHAPTER VII.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

About the latter end of the century, Coleridge visited North Germany again, in company with Mr. and Miss Wordsworth. Their tour was chiefly confined to the Hartz forest and its neighborhood. But the incidents most worthy of remembrance in their excursion, was a visit made to Klopstock; whom they found either at Hamburgh or, perhaps, at the Danish town (as then it was) of Altona; for Klopstock was a pensioner of the Danish king. An anonymous writer, who attacked Coleridge most truculently in an early number of Blackwood, and with an *acharnement* that must astonish those who knew its object, has made the mistake of supposing Coleridge to have been the chief speaker, who did not speak at all. The case was this: Klopstock could not speak English, though everybody remembers the pretty broken English of his second wife. Neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth, on the other hand, spoke German with any fluency. French, therefore, was the only medium of free communication; that being pretty equally familiar to Wordsworth and to Klopstock. But Coleridge found so much difficulty even in *reading* French, that, wherever (as in the case of *Leibnitz's Theodicée*) there was a choice between an original written in French and a translation, though it might be a very faulty one, in Ger-

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man, he always preferred the latter. Hence, it happened that Wordsworth, on behalf of the English party, was the sole supporter of the dialogue. The anonymous critic says another thing, which certainly has an air of truth, viz., that Klopstock plays a very secondary *role* in the interview (or words to that effect.) But how was that to be avoided in reporting the case, supposing the fact to have been such? Now the plain truth is, that Wordworth, upon his own ground, is an incomparable talker; whereas, Klubstick (as Coleridge used to call him) was always a feeble and careless one. Besides, he was now old and decaying. Nor at any time, nor in any accomplishment, could Klopstock have shone, unless in the noble art of skating. Wordsworth did the very opposite of that with which he was taxed; for, happening to look down at Klopstock's swollen legs, and recollecting his age, he felt touched by a sort of filial pity for his helplessness. And upon another principle, which, in my judgment, Wordsworth is disposed to carry too far, viz., the forbearance, and the ceremonious caution which he habitually concedes to an established reputation, even where he believes it to have been built on a hollow foundation, — he came to the conclusion, that it would not seem becoming in a young, and as yet obscure author, to report faithfully the real superiority he too easily maintained in such a colloquy.

But neither had Klopstock the pretensions as a poet, which the Blackwood writer seems to take for granted. Germany, the truth is, wanted a great Epic poet. Not having produced one in that early condition of her literary soil when such a growth is natural and favored by circumstances, the next thing was to manufacture a substitute. The force of Coleridge's well known repartee — when, in reply to a foreigner asserting that Klopstock was the German Milton, he said, 'True, sir; a *very* German

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Milton,' — cannot be fully appreciated but by one who is familiar with the German poetry, and the small proportion in which it is a natural and spontaneous product. It has been often noticed, as the misfortune of the Roman literature, that it grew up too much under the oppression of Grecian models, and of Grecian models depraved by Alexandrian art; a fact, so far as it was a fact, which crippled the *genial* and characteristic spirit of the national mind. But this evil, after all, did not take effect except in a partial sense. Rome had cast much of her literature in her own moulds before these exotic models had begun to domineer. Not so with Germany. Her literature, since its revival in the last century (and the revival upon the impulse of what cattle! — Bodmer on the one hand, and Gottsched on the other!) has hardly moved a step in the freedom of natural grace. England for nineteen, and France for the twentieth of all her capital works, has given the too servile law: and with regard to Klopstock, if ever there was a good exemplification of the spurious and the counterfeit in literature, seek it in the 'Messiah.' He is verily and indeed the *Birmingham* Milton. This Klopstockian dialogue, by the way, was first printed (hardly *published*) in the original, or Lake edition of 'The Friend.' In the recast of that work it was omitted: nor has it been printed anywhere else that I am aware of.

About the close of the first revolutionary war it must have been, or in the brief interval of peace, that Coleridge resorted to the English Lakes as a place of residence. Wordsworth had a natural connection with that region by birth, breeding, and family alliances. Wordsworth attracted Coleridge to the Lakes; and Coleridge, through his affinity to Southey, eventually attracted *him*. Southey, as is known to all who take an interest in the Lake colony, married a sister of Mrs. Coleridge's: and,

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as a singular eccentricity in the circumstances of that marriage, I may mention, that, on his wedding day, (at the very portico of the church, I have been told,) Southey left his bride, to embark for Lisbon. His uncle, Dr. Herbert, was chaplain to the English factory in that city; and it was to benefit by the facilities in that way opened to him for seeing Portugal that Southey now went abroad. He extended his tour to Spain; and the result of his notices was communicated to the world in a volume of travels. By such accidents of personal or family connection as I have mentioned, was the Lake colony gathered; and the critics of the day, unaware of the real facts, supposed them to have assembled under common views in literature — particularly with regard to the true functions of poetry, and the true theory of poetic diction. Under this original blunder, laughable it is to mention, that they went on to *find* in their writings all the agreements and common characteristics which their blunder had presumed: and they incorporated the whole community under the name of the *Lake School.* Yet Wordsworth and Southey never had one principle in common. Indeed, Southey troubled himself little about abstract principles in anything; and so far from agreeing with Wordsworth to the extent of setting up a separate school in poetry, he told me himself (August 1812), that he highly disapproved both of Mr. Wordsworth's theories and of his practice. It is very true, that one man may sympathize with another, or even follow his leading, unconscious that he does so; or he may go so far as, in the very act of virtual imitation, to deem himself in opposition; but this sort of blind agreement could hardly be supposed of two men as discerning and as self-examining as Wordsworth and Southey. And, in fact, a philosophic investigation of the difficult questions con-

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nected with this whole slang about schools, Lake schools, &c., would show that Southey has not, nor ever had, any *peculiarities* in common with Wordsworth, beyond that of exchanging the old prescriptive diction of poetry, introduced between the periods of Milton and Cowper, for the simpler and profounder forms of daily life in some instances, and of the Bible in others. The bold and uniform practice of Wordsworth was here adopted timidly by Southey. In this respect, however, Cowper had already begun the reform; and his influence, concurring with the now larger influence of Wordsworth, has operated so extensively, as to make their own original differences at this day less perceptible.

By the way, the word *colony*, reminds me that I have omitted to mention, in its proper place, some scheme for migrating to America, which had been entertained by Coleridge and Southey about the year 1794–95, under the learned name of *Pantisocracy*. So far as I ever heard, it differed little, except in its Grecian name, from any other scheme for mitigating the privations of a wilderness, by settling in a cluster of families bound together by congenial tastes and uniform principles, rather than in self-depending, insulated households. Steadily pursued, it might, after all, have been a fortunate plan for Coleridge. 'Soliciting my food from daily toil,' a line in which Coleridge alludes to the scheme, implies a condition that would have upheld Coleridge's health and happiness, somewhat better than the habits of luxurious city life as now constituted in Europe. To return to the Lakes, and to the Lake colony of poets: — So little were Southey and Wordsworth connected by any personal intercourse in those days, and so little disposed to be connected, that, whilst the latter had a cottage in Grasmere, Southey pitched his tent at Greta Hall, on a little eminence rising

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immediately from the romantic river Greta and the town of Keswick. Grasmere is in Westmoreland; Keswick in Cumberland; and they are thirteen good miles apart. Coleridge and his family were domiciliated in Greta Hall, sharing that house, a tolerably large one, on some principle of amicable division, with Mr. Southey. But Coleridge personally was more often to be found at Grasmere — which presented the threefold attractions of loveliness so complete, as to eclipse even the scenery of Derwentwater; a pastoral state of society, free from the deformities of a little town like Keswick; and, finally, the society of Wordsworth. Not before 1815, or 1816, could it be said that Southey and Wordsworth were even upon friendly terms; so entirely is it untrue that they combined to frame a school of poetry. Up to that time, they viewed each other with mutual respect, but also with mutual dislike; almost, I might say, with mutual disgust. Wordsworth disliked in Southey the want of depth, as regards the power of philosophic abstraction, of comprehensive views, and of severe principles of thought. Southey disliked in Wordsworth, the air of dogmatism, and the unaffable haughtiness of his manner. Other more trivial reasons combined with these.

At this time, when Coleridge first settled at the Lakes, or not long after, a romantic and somewhat tragical affair drew the eyes of all England, and, for many years, continued to draw the steps of tourists, to one of the most secluded Cumberland valleys, so little visited previously, that it might be described almost as an undiscovered chamber of that romantic district. Coleridge was brought into a closer connection with this affair than merely by the general relation of neighborhood; for an article of his in a morning paper, I believe, unintentionally furnished the original clew for unmasking the base impostor who

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figured as the foremost actor in this tale. Other generations have arisen since that time, who must naturally be unacquainted with the circumstances; and, on their account, I shall here recall them. One day in the Lake season, there drove up to the Royal Oak, the principal inn at Keswick, a handsome and well-appointed travelling carriage, containing one gentleman of somewhat dashing exterior. The stranger was a picturesque-hunter, but not of that order who fly round the ordinary tour with the velocity of lovers posting to Gretna, or of criminals running from the police; his purpose was to domiciliate himself in this beautiful scenery, and to see it at his leisure. From Keswick, as his head-quarters, he made excursions in every direction amongst the neighboring valleys; meeting generally a good deal of respect and attention, partly on account of his handsome equipage, and still more from his visiting cards, which designated him as 'The Hon. Augustus Hope.' Under this name, he gave himself out for a brother of Lord Hopetoun's, whose great income was well known, and, perhaps, exaggerated amongst the dalesmen of northern England. Some persons had discernment enough to doubt of this; for the man's breeding and deportment, though showy, had a tang of vulgarity about it; and Coleridge assured me, that he was grossly ungrammatical in his ordinary conversation. However, one fact, soon dispersed by the people of a little rustic post-office, laid asleep all demurs; he not only received letters addressed to him under this assumed name,—*that* might be through collusion with accomplices,— but he himself continually *franked* letters by that name. Now, *that* being a capital offence, being not only a forgery, but, (as a forgery on the Post-office,) sure to be prosecuted, nobody presumed to question his pretensions any longer; and, henceforward, he went to

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all places with the consideration attached to an Earl's brother. All doors flew open at his approach: boats, boatmen, nets, and the most unlimited sporting privileges, were placed at the disposal of the 'Honorable' gentleman: and the hospitality of the whole country taxed itself to offer a suitable reception to the patrician Scotsman. It could be no blame to a shepherd girl, bred in the sternest solitude which England has to show, that she should fall into a snare which hardly any of her betters had escaped. Nine miles from Keswick, by the nearest bridle-road, but fourteen or fifteen by any route which the honorable gentleman's travelling carriage could have traversed, lies the Lake of Buttermere. Its margin, which is overhung by some of the loftiest and steepest of the Cumbrian mountains, exhibits on either side few traces of human neighborhood; the level area, where the hills recede enough to allow of any, is of a wild pastoral character, or almost savage; the waters of the lake are deep and sullen; and the barrier mountains, by excluding the sun for much of his daily course, strengthen the gloomy impressions. At the foot of this lake (that is, at the end where its waters issue) lie a few unornamented fields, through which rolls a little brook-like river connecting it with the larger Lake of Crummock; and at the edge of this miniature domain, upon the roadside, stands a cluster of cottages, so small and few that, in the richer tracts of the islands, they would scarcely be complimented with the name of hamlet. One of these, and I believe the principal, belonged to an independent proprietor, called, in the local dialect, a '*Statesman;*' and more, perhaps, for the sake of gathering any little local news, than with much view to pecuniary profit at that era, this cottage offered the accommodations of an inn to the traveller and his horse. Rare, however, must have been the mounted

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traveller in those days, unless visiting Buttermere for itself, and as a *terminus ad quem;* for the road led to no further habitations of man, with the exception of some four or five pastoral cabins, equally humble, in Gatesgarth Dale.

Hither, however, in an evil hour for the peace of this little brotherhood of shepherds, came the cruel spoiler from Keswick. His errand was, to witness or to share in the char-fishing; for in Derwentwater (the Lake of Keswick) no char is found, which breeds only in the deeper waters, such as Windermere, Crummock, Buttermere, &c. But whatever had been his first object, *that* was speedily forgotten in one more deeply interesting. The daughter of the house, a fine young woman of eighteen, acted as waiter. In a situation so solitary, the stranger had unlimited facilities for enjoying her company, and recommending himself to her favor. Doubts about his pretensions never arose in so simple a place as this; they were overruled before they *could* well have arisen, by the opinion now general in Keswick that he really was what he pretended to be: and thus, with little demur, except in the shape of a few natural words of parting anger from a defeated or rejected rustic admirer, the young woman gave her hand in marriage to the showy and unprincipled stranger. I know not whether the marriage was, or could have been, celebrated in the little mountain chapel of Buttermere. If it were, I persuade myself that the most hardened villain must have felt a momentary pang on violating the altar of such a chapel, so touchingly does it express, by its miniature dimensions, the almost helpless humility of that little pastoral community to whose spiritual wants it has from generation to generation administered. It is not only the very smallest chapel by many degrees in all

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England, but is so mere a toy in outward appearance, that, were it not for its antiquity, its wild mountain exposure, and its consecrated connection with the final hopes and fears of the adjacent pastoral hamlet, — but for these considerations, the first movement of a stranger's feelings would be towards loud laughter; for the little chapel looks not so much a mimic chapel in a drop scene from the Opera House, as a miniature copy from such a scene; and evidently could not receive within its walls more than a half dozen of households. From this sanctuary it was — from beneath the maternal shadow, if not from the altar of this lonely chapel, — that the heartless villain carried off the flower of the mountains. Between this place and Keswick they continued to move backwards and forwards, until at length, with the startling of a thunderclap to the affrighted mountaineers, the bubble burst: officers of justice appeared: the stranger was easily intercepted from flight; and, upon a capital charge, was borne away to Carlisle. At the ensuing assizes he was tried for forgery, on the prosecution of the Post-office; found guilty, left for execution, and executed accordingly. On the day of his condemnation, Wordsworth and Coleridge passed through Carlisle, and endeavored to obtain an interview with him. Wordsworth succeeded; but, for some unknown reason, the prisoner steadily refused to see Coleridge; a caprice which could not be penetrated. It is true that he had, during his whole residence at Keswick, avoided Coleridge with a solicitude which had revived the original suspicions against him in some quarters, after they had generally subsided. But for this, his motive had then been sufficient: he was of a Devonshire family, and naturally feared the eye, or the inquisitive examination, of one who

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bore a name immemorially associated with the southern part of that county.

Coleridge, however, had been transplanted so immaturely from his native region, that few people in England knew less of its family connections. That, perhaps, was unknown to this malefactor; but at any rate he knew that all motive was now at an end for disguise of any sort; so that his reserve, in this particular, was unintelligible. However, if not him, Coleridge saw and examined his very interesting papers. These were chiefly letters from women whom he had injured, pretty much in the same way and by the same impostures as he had so recently practised in Cumberland; and, as Coleridge assured me, were in part the most agonizing appeals that he had ever read to human justice and pity. The man's real name was, I think, Hatfield. And amongst the papers were two separate correspondences, of some length, from two young women, apparently of superior condition in life, (one the daughter of an English clergyman,) whom this villain had deluded by marriage, and, after some cohabitation, abandoned, — one of them with a family of young children. Great was the emotion of Coleridge when he recurred to his remembrance of these letters, and bitter — almost vindictive — was the indignation with which he spoke of Hatfield. One set of letters appeared to have been written under too certain a knowledge of *his* villany to whom they were addressed; though still relying on some possible remains of humanity, or perhaps, (the poor writer might think,) on some lingering relics of affection for herself. The other set was even more distressing; they were written under the first conflicts of suspicions, alternately repelling with warmth the gloomy doubts which were fast arising, and then yielding to their afflicting evidence: raving in one page under the misery of

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alarm, in another courting the delusions of hope, and luring back the perfidious deserter, — here resigning herself to despair, and there again laboring to show that all might yet be well Coleridge said often, in looking back upon that frightful exposure of human guilt and misery, — and I also echoed his feeling, — that the man who, when pursued by these heart-rending apostrophes, and with this litany of anguish sounding in his ears, from despairing women, and from famishing children, could yet find it possible to enjoy the calm pleasures of a Lake tourist, and deliberately to hunt for the picturesque, must have been a fiend of that order which fortunately does not often emerge amongst men. It is painful to remember that, in those days, amongst the multitudes who ended their career in the same ignominious way, and the majority for offences connected with the forgery of Bank notes, there must have been a considerable number who perished from the very opposite cause, — viz., because they felt, too passionately and profoundly for prudence, the claims of those who looked up to them for support. One common scaffold confounds the most flinty hearts and the tenderest. However, in this instance, it was in some measure the heartless part of Hatfield's conduct, which drew upon him his ruin: for the Cumberland Jury, as I have been told, declared their unwillingness to hang him for having forged a frank; and both they, and those who refused to aid his escape, when first apprehended, were reconciled to this harshness entirely by what they heard of his conduct to their injured, young fellow-countrywoman.

She, meantime, under the name of *the Beauty of Buttermere*, became an object of interest to all England: dramas and melo-dramas were produced in the London theatres upon her story; and for many a year afterwards,

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shoals of tourists crowded to the secluded lake, and the little homely cabaret, which had been the scene of her brief romance. It was fortunate for a person in her distressing situation, that her home was not in a town: the few, and simple neighbors, who had witnessed her imaginary elevation, having little knowledge of worldly feelings, never for an instant connected with her disappointment any sense of the ludicrous, or spoke of it as a calamity to which her vanity might have co-operated. They treated it as unmixed injury, reflecting shame upon nobody but the wicked perpetrator. Hence, without much trial to her womanly sensibilities, she found herself able to resume her situation in the little inn; and this she continued to hold for many years. In that place, and that capacity, I saw her repeatedly, and shall here say a word upon her personal appearance, because the Lake poets all admired her greatly. Her figure was, in my eyes, good; but I doubt whether most of my readers would have thought it such. She was none of your evanescent, wasp-waisted beauties; on the contrary, she was rather large every way; tallish, and proportionably broad. Her face was fair, and her features feminine; and unquestionably she was what all the world have agreed to call 'good-looking.' But, except in her arms, which had something of a statuesque beauty, and in her carriage, which expressed a womanly grace, together with some slight dignity and self-possession, I confess that I looked in vain for any *positive* qualities of any sort or degree. *Beautiful*, in any emphatic sense, she was not. Everything about her face and bust was negative; simply without offence. Even this, however, was more than could be said at all times: for the expression of her countenance was often disagreeable. This arose out of

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her situation; connected as it was with defective sensibility, and a misdirected pride.

Nothing operates so differently upon different minds, and different styles of beauty, as the inquisitive gaze of strangers, whether in the spirit of respectful admiration, or of insolence. Some I have seen, upon whose angelic beauty this sort of confusion settled advantageously, and like a softening veil; others, in whom it meets with proud resentment, are sometimes disfigured by it. In Mary of Buttermere, it roused mere anger and disdain; which, meeting with the sense of her humble and dependent situation, gave birth to a most unhappy aspect of countenance. Men, who had no touch of a gentleman's nature in their composition, sometimes insulted her by looks and by words: and she too readily attributed the same spirit of impertinent curiosity to every man whose eyes happened to settle steadily upon her face. Yet, once at least, I must have seen her under the most favorable circumstances: for on my first visit to Buttermere, I had the pleasure of Mr. Southey's company, who was incapable of wounding anybody's feelings, and to Mary, in particular, was well known by kind attentions, and I believe by some services. Then at least I saw her to advantage, and perhaps, for a figure of her build, at the best age; for it was about nine or ten years after her misfortune, when she might be twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. We were alone, a solitary pair of tourists: nothing arose to confuse or distress her. She waited upon us at dinner, and talked to us freely. 'This is a respectable young woman,' I said to myself; but nothing of that enthusiasm could I feel, which beauty, such as I *have* beheld at the lakes, would have been apt to raise under a similar misfortune. One lady, not very scrupulous in her embellishments of facts, used to tell an

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anecdote of her, which I hope was exaggerated. Some friend of hers, (as she affirmed,) in company with a large party, visited Buttermere, within a day or two after that upon which Hatfield suffered; and she protested that Mary threw upon the table, with an emphatic gesture, the Carlisle paper, containing an elaborate account of his execution.

It is an instance of Coleridge's carelessness — that he, who had as little ill-nature in his temper as any person whom I have ever known, managed, in reporting this story at the time of its occurrence, to get himself hooked into a personal quarrel, which hung over his head unsettled for nine or ten years. A Liverpool merchant, who was then meditating a house in the vale of Grasmere, and perhaps might have incurred Coleridge's anger, by thus disturbing, with inappropriate intrusions, this loveliest of all English landscapes, had connected himself a good deal with Hatfield during his Keswick masquerade: and was said even to have carried his regard to that villain so far as to have christened one of his own children by the names of 'Augustus Hope.' With these and other circumstances, expressing the extent of the infatuation amongst the swindler's dupes, Coleridge made the public merry. Naturally the Liverpool merchant was not amongst those who admired the facetiousness of Coleridge on this occasion, but swore vengeance whenever they should meet. They never *did* meet, until ten years had gone by, and then, oddly enough, it was in the Liverpool man's own house — that very nuisance of a house which had, I suppose, first armed Coleridge's wrath against him. This house, by time and accident, in no very wonderful way, had passed into the hands of Wordsworth as tenant. Coleridge, as was still less wonderful, had become the visiter of Wordsworth on returning from Malta; and the

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Liverpool merchant, as was also natural, either seeking his rent, or for what other purpose I know not, calling upon Wordsworth, met Coleridge in the hall. Now came the hour for settling old accounts. I was present, and can report the case. Both looked grave, and colored a little. But Coleridge, requesting his enemy's company in the garden, entered upon a long metaphysical dissertation, which was rather puzzling to answer. It seemed to be an expansion, by Thomas Aquinas, of that parody upon a well known passage in Shenstone, where the writer says—

> 'He kicked me down stairs with such a sweet grace,
> That I thought he was handing me up.'

And in the upshot it clearly made it appear that, purely on principles of good neighborhood, and universal philanthropy, could Coleridge have meditated or executed the insult offered in the *Morning Post*. The Liverpool merchant rubbed his forehead, and seemed a little perplexed; but at length, considering, perhaps, how very like Duns Scotus, or Albertus Magnus, Coleridge had shown himself in this luminous explanation, he began to reflect, that had any one of those distinguished men offered a similar affront, it would have been impossible to resent it; for who could think of caning the Seraphic doctor? or would it tell to any man's advantage in history that he had kicked Thomas Aquinas? On these principles, therefore, without saying one word, he held out his hand, and a lasting reconciliation followed.

Not very long, I believe, after this affair of Hatfield, Coleridge went to Malta. His inducement to such a step must have been merely a desire to see the most interesting regions of the Mediterranean, under the shelter and advantageous introduction of an official station. It was, however, an unfortunate chapter of his life: for being

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necessarily thrown a good deal upon his own resources in the narrow society of a garrison, he there confirmed and cherished, if he did not there form, his habit of taking opium in large quantities. I am the last person in the world to press conclusions harshly or uncandidly against Coleridge; but I believe it to be notorious that he first began the use of opium, not as a relief from any bodily pains or nervous irritations — for his constitution was strong and excellent — but as a source of luxurious sensations. It is a great misfortune, at least it is a great peril, to have tasted the enchanted cup of youthful rapture incident to the poetic temperament. That standard of high-wrought sensibility once made known experimentally, it is rare to see a submission afterwards to the sobrieties of daily life. Coleridge, to speak in the words of Cervantes, wanted better bread than was made of wheat; and when youthful blood no longer sustained the riot of his animal spirits, he endeavored to excite them by artificial stimulants.

At Malta he became acquainted with Commodore Decatur and other Americans of distinction; and this brought him afterwards into connection with Allston the American artist. Of Sir Alexander Ball, one of Lord Nelson's captains in the battle of the Nile, and now Governor of Malta, he spoke and wrote uniformly in a lavish style of panegyric, for which plainer men found it difficult to see the slightest ground. It was, indeed, Coleridge's amiable infirmity to project his own mind, and his own very peculiar ideas, nay, even his own expressions and illustrative metaphors, upon other men, and to contemplate these reflex images from himself, as so many characters having an absolute ground in some separate object. Ball and Bell were two of these pet subjects; he had a 'craze' about each of them; and

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to each he ascribed thoughts and words, to which, had they been put upon the rack, they never would have confessed.

From Malta, on his return homewards, he went to Rome and Naples. One of the Cardinals, he tells us, warned him, by the Pope's wish, of some plot, set on foot by Bonaparte, for seizing him as an anti-Gallican writer. This statement was ridiculed, by the anonymous assailant in *Blackwood*, as the very consummation of moon-struck vanity; and it is there compared to John Dennis's frenzy in retreating from the seacoast, under the belief that Louis XIV. had commissioned emissaries to land on the English shore and make a dash at his person. But, after all, the thing is not so entirely improbable. For it is certain that some orator of the Opposition (Charles Fox, as Coleridge asserts,) had pointed out all the principal writers in the *Morning Post*, to Napoleon's vengeance, by describing the war as a war 'of that journal's creation.' And, as to the insinuation that Napoleon was above throwing his regards upon a simple writer of political essays, *that* is not only abundantly confuted by many scores of analogous cases, but also is specially put down by a case circumstantially recorded in the second tour to Paris, by the celebrated John Scott. It there appears, that, on no other ground whatever, than that of his connection with the London newspaper press, some friend of Mr. Scott's had been courted most assiduously by Napoleon during the *hundred days*. Assuredly, Coleridge deserved, beyond all other men that ever were connected with the daily press, to be regarded with distinction. Worlds of fine thinking lie buried in that vast abyss, never to be disentombed or restored to human admiration. Like the sea it has swallowed treasures without end, that no diving bell will bring up again. But

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nowhere throughout its shoreless magazines of wealth, does there lie such a bed of pearls confounded with the rubbish and 'purgamenta' of ages, as in the political papers of Coleridge. No more *appreciable* monument could be raised to the memory of Coleridge, than a republication of his essays in the *Morning Post*, but still more of those afterwards published in the *Courier*. And here, by the way, it may be mentioned, that the sagacity of Coleridge, as applied to the signs of the times, is illustrated by the fact, that, distinctly and solemnly he foretold the restoration of the Bourbons, at a period when most people viewed such an event as the most romantic of visions, and not less chimerical than that 'march upon Paris,' of Lord Hawkesbury's, which for so many years supplied a theme of laughter to the Whigs.

Why Coleridge left Malta, is as difficult to explain upon any principles of ordinary business, as why he had ever gone thither. The post of secretary, if it imposed any official attendance of a regular kind, or any official correspondence, must have been but poorly filled by *him;* and Sir Alexander Ball, if I have collected his character justly, was not likely to accept the gorgeous philosophy of Coleridge, as an indemnification for irregular performance of his public duties. Perhaps, therefore, though on the best terms of mutual regard, they might be mutually pleased to part. At any rate they *did* part; and poor Coleridge was seasick the whole of his homeward (as he had been through the whole of his outward) voyage.

It was not long after this event that my own introduction to Coleridge occurred. At that time some negotiation was pending between him and the Royal Institution, which ended in their engaging him to deliver a course of lectures on Poetry and the Fine Arts, during the ensuing winter. For this series (twelve or sixteen, I think,) he

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received a sum of one hundred guineas. And considering the slightness of the pains which he bestowed upon them, he was well remunerated. I fear that they did not increase his reputation; for never did any man treat his audience with less respect, or his task with less careful attention. I was in London for part of the time, and can report the circumstances, having made a point of attending duly at the appointed hours. Coleridge was at that time living uncomfortably enough at the *Courier* Office, in the Strand. In such a situation, annoyed by the sound of feet passing his chamber door continually to the printing rooms of this great establishment, and with no gentle ministrations of female hands to sustain his cheerfulness, naturally enough his spirits flagged; and he took more than ordinary doses of opium. I called upon him daily, and pitied his forlorn condition. There was no bell in the room, which for many months answered the double purpose of bed-room and sitting-room. Consequently, I often saw him, picturesquely enveloped in night caps, surmounted by handkerchiefs indorsed upon handkerchiefs, shouting from the attics of the *Courier* Office, down three or four flights of stairs, to a certain 'Mrs. Brainbridge,' his sole attendant, whose dwelling was in the subterranean regions of the house. There did I often see the philosopher, with a most lugubrious face, invoking with all his might this uncouth name of 'Brainbridge,' each syllable of which he intonated with long-drawn emphasis, in order to overpower the hostile hubbub coming downwards from the press, and the roar from the Strand, which entered at all the front windows. 'Mrs. Brainbridge! I say, Mrs. Brainbridge!' was the perpetual cry, until I expected to hear the Strand, and distant Fleet Street, take up the echo of 'Brainbridge!' Thus unhappily situated, he sank more than ever under

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the dominion of opium; so that, at two o'clock, when he should have been in attendance at the Royal Institution, he was too often unable to rise from bed. Then came dismissals of audience after audience with pleas of illness; and on many of his lecture days, I have seen all Albemarle Street closed by a 'lock' of carriages filled with women of distinction, until the servants of the Institution or their own footmen advanced to the carriage doors with the intelligence that Mr. Coleridge had been suddenly taken ill. This plea, which at first had been received with expressions of concern, repeated too often, began to rouse disgust. Some in anger, and some in real uncertainty whether it would not be trouble thrown away, ceased to attend. And we that were more constant, too often found reason to be disappointed with the quality of his lecture. His appearance was generally that of a person struggling with pain and overmastering illness. His lips were baked with feverish heat, and often black in color; and in spite of the water which he continued drinking through the whole course of his lecture, he often seemed to labor under an almost paralytic inability to raise the upper jaw from the lower. In such a state it is clear that nothing could save the lecture itself from reflecting his own feebleness and exhaustion, except the advantage of having been precomposed in some happier mood. But that never happened: most unfortunately he relied upon his extempore ability to carry him through. Now, had he been in spirits, or had he gathered animation and kindled by his own motion, no written lecture could have been more effectual than one of his unpremeditated colloquial harangues. But either he was depressed originally below the point from which any re-ascent was possible, or else this re-action was intercepted by continual disgust, from looking back upon his own ill success; for

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assuredly he never once recovered that free and eloquent movement of thought which he could command at any time in a private company. The passages he read, moreover, in illustrating his doctrines, were generally unhappily chosen, because chosen at hap-hazard, from the difficulty of finding, at a moment's summons, those passages which he had in his eye. Nor do I remember any that produced much effect, except two or three, which I myself put ready marked into his hands, among the Metrical Romances edited by Ritson.

Generally speaking, the selections were as injudicious and as inappropriate, as they were ill delivered; for amongst Coleridge's accomplishments good reading was not one; he had neither voice, nor management of voice. This defect is unfortunate in a public lecturer; for it is inconceivable how much weight and effectual pathos can be communicated by sonorous depth, and melodious cadences of the human voice, to sentiments the most trivial; nor, on the other hand, how the grandest are emasculated by a style of reading, which fails in distributing the lights and shadows of a musical intonation. However, this defect chiefly concerned the immediate impression; the most afflicting to a friend of Coleridge's was the entire absence of his own peculiar and majestic intellect; no heart, no soul, was in anything he said; no strength of feeling in recalling universal truths; no power of originality or compass of moral relations in his novelties — all was a poor faint reflection from jewels once scattered in the highway by himself, in the prodigality of his early opulence — a mendicant dependence on the alms dropped from his own overflowing treasury of happier times. Such a collapse, such a quenching of the eagle's talons, never was seen before. And as I returned from one of the most afflicting of these disappointments,

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I could not but repeat to myself parts of that divine chorus, —

> 'Oh! dark, dark, dark!
> Amid the blaze of noon
> Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse,' &c. &c.

The next opportunity I had of seeing Coleridge was at the lakes, in the winter of 1809, and up to the autumn of the following year. During this period, it was that he carried on the original publication of '*The Friend;*' and for much the greater part of the time I saw him daily. He lived as a visiter in the house occupied by Mr. Wordsworth; this house was in Grasmere; and in another part of the same vale, at a distance of barely one mile, I myself had a cottage and a considerable library. Many of my books being German, Coleridge borrowed them in great numbers. Having a general license from me to use them as he would, he was in the habit of accumulating them so largely at Allan Bank, (the name of Mr. Wordsworth's house,) that sometimes as many as five hundred were absent at once; which I mention, in order to notice a practice of Coleridge's, indicating his very scrupulous honor, in what regarded the rights of ownership. Literary people are not always so strict in respecting property of this description; and I know more than one celebrated man, who professes as a maxim, that he holds it no duty of honor to restore a borrowed book; not to speak of many less celebrated persons who, without openly professing such a principle, do however, in fact, exhibit a lax morality in such cases. The more honorable it was to poor Coleridge, who had means so trifling of buying books for himself — that, to prevent my flocks from mixing, and being confounded with the flocks already folded at Allan Bank, (his own and Wordsworth's,) or

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rather that they *might* mix without danger, he duly inscribed my name in the blank leaves of every volume; a fact which became rather painfully made known to me; for, as he had chosen to dub me *Esquire*, many years after this, it cost myself and a female friend some weeks of labor to hunt out these multitudinous memorials, and to erase this heraldic addition — which else had the appearance to a stranger of having been conferred by myself.

The Friend, in its original publication, was, as a pecuniary speculation, the least judicious, both in its objects and its means, I have ever known. It was printed at Penrith, a town in Cumberland, on the outer verge of the lake district, and precisely twenty-eight miles removed from Coleridge's abode. This distance, enough of itself in all conscience, was at least trebled in effect by the interposition of Kirkstone, a mountain which is scaled by a carriage ascent of three miles long, and so steep in parts, that, without four horses, no solitary traveller can persuade the neighboring innkeepers to carry him. Another road, by way of Keswick, is subject to its own separate difficulties. And thus in any practical sense, for ease, for certainty, and for dispatch, Liverpool, ninety-five miles distant, was virtually nearer. Dublin even, or Cork, was more eligible. Yet, in this town, so situated as I have stated, by way of purchasing such intolerable difficulties at the highest price, Coleridge was advised, and actually persuaded to set up a printer, by buying types, &c., instead of resorting to some printer already established in Kendal, a large and opulent town, not more than eighteen miles distant, and connected by a daily post; whereas, between himself and Penrith there was no post at all. Building his mechanical arrangements upon this utter 'upside-down' inversion of all common sense, it is

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not surprising (as 'madness ruled the hour') that in all other circumstances of plan or execution, the work moved by principles of downright crazy disregard to all that a judicious counsel would have suggested. The subjects were generally chosen, obstinately in defiance of the popular taste; they were treated in a style which avowed contempt for the popular models; and the plans adopted for obtaining payment were of a nature to insure a speedy bankruptcy to the concern. Coleridge had a list, nobody could ever say upon whose authority gathered together, of subscribers. He tells us himself that many of these renounced the work from an early period; and some (as Lord Corke) rebuked him for his presumption in sending it unordered, but (as Coleridge asserts) neither returned the copies, nor remitted the price. And even those who were conscientious enough to do this, could not remit four or five shillings for as many numbers without putting Coleridge to an expense of treble postage at the least. This he complains of bitterly in his *Biographia Literaria*, forgetting evidently that the evil was due exclusively to his own defective arrangements. People necessarily sent their subscriptions through such channels as were open to them, or such as were pointed out by Coleridge himself. It is also utterly unworthy of Coleridge to have taxed, as he does, many (or all, for any thing that appears,) of his subscribers with neglecting to pay at all. Probably nobody neglected. And, on the other hand, some, perhaps, did, as a most conscientious and venerable female relation of my own, who had subscribed merely to oblige me, and out of a general respect for Coleridge's powers, though finding nothing to suit her own taste: she, I happened to know, paid three times over, sending the money through three different channels according to the shifting directions which

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reached her. Managed as the reader will collect from these indications, the work was going down hill from the first. It never gained any accessions of new subscribers: from what source, then, was the continual dropping off of names to be supplied? The printer became a bankrupt: Coleridge was as much in arrear with his articles, as with his lectures at the Royal Institution. That he was from the very first; but now he was disgusted and desponding; and with No. 28 the work came to a final stop. Some years after, it was recast, as the phrase was, and republished. But, in fact, this recast was pretty nearly a new work. The sole contributor to the original work had been Wordsworth, who gave a very valuable paper on the principles concerned in the composition of Epitaphs; and Professor Wilson, who, in conjunction with Mr. Blair, an early friend, then visiting at his place on Windermere, wrote the letter signed *Mathetes*, the reply to which came from Mr. Wordsworth.

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CHAPTER VIII.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

At the Lakes, and summoned abroad by scenery so exquisite — living, too, in the bosom of a family endeared to him by long friendship and by sympathy the closest with all his propensities and tastes — Coleridge (it may be thought) could not sequester himself so profoundly as at the *Courier* Office within his own shell, or shut himself out so completely from that large dominion of eye and ear amongst the hills, the fields, and the woods, which once he had exercised so pleasantly to himself, and with a participation so immortal, through his exquisite poems, to all generations. He was not now reduced to depend upon 'Mrs. Brainbridge,' but looked out from his study windows upon the sublime hills of *Seat Sandal* and *Arthur's Chair*, and upon pastoral cottages at their feet; and all around him, he heard hourly the murmurings of happy life, the sound of female voices, and the innocent laughter of children. But, apparently, he was not happy himself: the accursed drug poisoned all natural pleasure at its sources; he burrowed continually deeper into scholastic subtleties and metaphysical abstraction, and, like that class described by Seneca, in the luxurious Rome of his days, he lived chiefly by candle-light. At two or three o'clock in the afternoon he would make his first appearance; through the silence of the night, when all other

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lights had long disappeared, in the quiet cottage of Grasmere *his* lamp might be seen invariably by the belated traveller, as he descended the long steep from Dun-mail-raise; and at five or six o'clock in the morning, when man was going forth to his labor, this insulated son of reveries was retiring to bed.

Society he did not much court, because much was not to be had; but he did not shrink from any which wore the promise of novelty. At that time the leading person about the Lakes, as regarded rank and station, amongst those who had any connection with literature, was Dr. Watson, the well known Bishop of Llandaff. This dignitary I knew myself as much as I wished to know him, having gone to his house five or six times purposely that I *might* know him: and I shall speak of him circumstantially. Those who have read his autobiography, or are otherwise acquainted with the outline of his career, will be aware that he was the son of a Westmoreland schoolmaster. Going to Cambridge, with no great store of classical knowledge, but with the more common accomplishment of Westmoreland men, and one better suited to Cambridge, viz., — a sufficient basis of mathematics, and a robust, though commonplace intellect, for improving his knowledge according to any direction which accident should prescribe, — he obtained the Professorship of Chemistry without one iota of chemical knowledge up to the hour when he gained it: and then setting eagerly to work, that he might not disgrace the choice which had thus distinguished him, long before the time arrived for commencing his prelections, he had made himself capable of writing those beautiful essays on that science, which after a revolution, and a counter-revolution, so great as succeeding times have witnessed, still remain a cardinal book of introductory discipline to such studies; an opinion

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authorized not only by Professor Thomson of Glasgow, but also, to myself, by the late Sir Humphry Davy. With this experimental proof that a Chemical Chair might be won and honored without previous knowledge even of the chemical alphabet, he resolved to play the same feat with the Royal Chair of Divinity; one far more important for local honor, and for wealth. Here again he succeeded: and this time he extended his experiment; for whereas both Chairs had been won without *previous* knowledge, he resolved that in this case it should be maintained without *after* knowledge. He applied himself simply to the improvement of its income, which he raised from £300 to at least £1000 per annum. All this he had accomplished before reaching the age of thirty-five.

Riches are with us the parent of riches; and success, in the hands of an active man, is the pledge of further success. On the basis of this Cambridge preferment, Dr. Watson built upwards, until he had raised himself, in one way or other, to a seat in the House of Lords, and to a commensurate income. For the latter half of his life, he — originally a village schoolmaster's son — was able to associate with the *magnates* of the land, upon equal terms. And that fact, of itself, without another word, implies, in this country, a degree of rank and fortune which one would think a sufficient reward even for merit as unquestionable as was that of Dr. Watson. Yet he was always a discontented man, and a railer at the Government and the age which could permit merit such as his to pine away ingloriously, in one of the humblest amongst the bishoprics, with no other addition to its emoluments than the richest Professorship in Europe, and such other accidents in life as gave him in all, perhaps, not above seven thousand per annum! Poor man! — only seven thousand per annum! What a trial to a man's patience! — and

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how much he stood in need of philosophy, or even of religion, to face so dismal a condition!

This Bishop was himself, in a secondary way, an interesting study. What I mean is, that, though originally the furthest removed from an interesting person, being a man remarkable indeed for robust faculties, but otherwise commonplace in his character, worldly-minded, and coarse, even to obtuseness, in his sensibilities, he yet became interesting from the strength of *degree* with which these otherwise repulsive characteristics were marked. He was one of that numerous order in whom even the love of knowledge is subordinate to schemes of advancement; and to whom even his own success, and his own honor consequent upon that success, had no higher value than according to their use as instruments for winning further promotion. Hence it was, that, when by such aids he had mounted to a certain eminence, beyond which he saw little promise of further ascent, by *their* assistance — since at this stage it was clear, that party connection in politics must become his main reliance — he ceased to regard his favorite sciences with much interest. Even chemistry was now neglected. This, above all, was perplexing to one who did not understand his character. For hither one would have supposed he might have retreated from his political disappointments, and have found a perpetual consolation in honors which no intrigues could defeat, and in the gratitude, so pure and untainted, which still attended the honorable exertions of his youth. But he viewed the matter in a very different light. Other generations had come since then, and 'other palms were won.' To keep pace with the advancing science, and to maintain his station amongst his youthful competitors, would demand a youthful vigor and motives such as theirs. But, as to himself, chemistry had given all it could give. Having

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first raised himself to distinction by that, he had since married into an ancient family — one of the leaders amongst the landed aristocracy of his own county: — he thus had entitled himself to call the head of that family, — a territorial potentate with ten thousand per annum, — by the contemptuous sobriquet of 'Dull Daniel;' he looked down upon numbers whom, twenty years before, he scarcely durst have looked up to; he had obtained a bishopric. Chemistry had done all this for him; and had, besides, co-operating with luck, put him in the way of reaping a large estate from the gratitude and early death of a pupil, Mr. Luther. All this chemistry had effected: could chemistry do anything more? Clearly not. And here it was, that, having lost his motives for cultivating it farther, he regarded the present improvers of the science, not with the feelings natural to a disinterested lover of such studies on their own account, but with jealousy, as men who had eclipsed or had bedimmed his own once brilliant reputation. Two revolutions had occurred since his own 'palmy days;' Sir Humphry Davy might be right; and all might be gold that glistened; but, for his part, he was too old to learn new theories — he must be content to hobble to his grave with such old-fashioned creeds as had answered in his time, when, for aught he could see, men prospered as much as in this new-fangled world. This was the tone of his ordinary talk; and, in one sense — as regards personal claims, I mean — it was illiberal enough; for the leaders of modern chemistry never overlooked *his* claims. Professor Thomson of Glasgow always spoke of his 'Essays' as of a book which hardly any revolution could antiquate; and Sir Humphry Davy, in reply to a question which I put to him upon that point, in 1813, declared that he knew of no book better qualified, as one of introductory discipline

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to the youthful experimenter, or as an apprenticeship to the taste in elegant selection of topics.

Yet querulous and discontented as the Bishop was, when he adverted either to chemistry or to his own position in life, the reader must not imagine to himself the ordinary 'complement' and appurtenances of that character — such as moroseness, illiberality or stinted hospitalities. On the contrary, his Lordship was a joyous, jovial, and cordial host. He was pleasant, and even kind in his manners; most hospitable in his reception of strangers, no matter of what party; and I must say that he was as little overbearing in argument, and as little stood upon his privilege as a church dignitary, as any 'big wig' I have happened to know. He was somewhat pompous, undoubtedly; but that, in an old academic hero, was rather agreeable, and had a characteristic effect. He listened patiently to all your objections; and, though steeped to the lips in prejudice, he was really candid. I mean to say, that although, generally speaking, the unconscious pre-occupation of his understanding shut up all avenues to new convictions, he yet did his best to open his mind to any views that might be presented at the moment. And, with regard to his querulous egotism, though it may appear laughable enough to all who contrast his real pretensions with their public appreciation, as expressed in his acquired opulence and rank; and who contrast, also, his case with that of other men in his own profession, — such as Paley for example, — yet it cannot be denied that fortune had crossed his path, latterly, with foul winds, no less strikingly than his early life had been seconded by her favoring gales. In particular, Lord Holland mentioned to a friend of my own the following anecdote: — 'What you say of the Bishop may be very true: [they were riding past his grounds at the time,

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which had turned the conversation upon his character and public claims:] but to *us* [Lord Holland meant to the Whig party] he was truly honorable and faithful; insomuch, that my uncle had agreed with Lord Granville to make him Archbishop of York, *sede vacante;* — all was settled; and had we staid in power a little longer, he would, beyond a doubt, have had that dignity.'

Now, if the reader happens to recollect how soon the death of Dr. Markham followed the sudden dissolution of that short-lived administration in 1807, he will see how narrowly Dr. Watson missed this elevation; and one must allow for a little occasional spleen under such circumstances. Yet what an archbishop! He talked openly, at his own table, as a Socinian; ridiculed the miracles of the New Testament, which he professed to explain as so many chemical tricks, or cases of politic legerdemain; and certainly had as little of devotional feeling as any man that ever lived. It is, by comparison, a matter of little consequence, that, in her spiritual integrity so little regarding the church of which he called himself a member, he should, in her temporal interests, have been ready to lay her open to any assaults from almost any quarter. He could naturally have little reverence for the rights of the shepherds, having so little for the pastoral office itself, or for the manifold duties it imposes. All his public, all his professional duties, he systematically neglected. He was a Lord in Parliament, and for many a year he never attended in his place: he was a Bishop, and he scarcely knew any part of his diocese by sight — living three hundred miles away from it: he was a Professor of Divinity; he held the richest Professorship in Europe, the weightiest, for its functions, in England, — he drew, by his own admission, one thousand per annum from its endowments, (deducting some stipend to his *locum tenens*

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at Cambridge;) and for thirty years he never read a lecture, or performed a public exercise. Spheres how vast of usefulness to a man as able as himself! — subjects of what bitter anguish on the death-bed of one who had been tenderly alive to his own duties! In his political purism, and the unconscious partisanship of his constitutional scruples, he was a true Whig, and thoroughly diverting. That Lord Lonsdale or that the Duke of Northumberland should interfere with elections, *that* he thought scandalous and awful; but that a Lord of the house of Cavendish or Howard, a Duke of Devonshire or Norfolk, or an Earl of Carlisle, should traffic in boroughs, or exert the most despotic influence as landlords, *mutato nomine*, he viewed as the mere natural right of property: and so far was he from loving the pure-hearted and unfactious champions of liberty, that, in one of his printed works, he dared to tax Milton with having knowingly, wilfully, deliberately told a falsehood.*

Coleridge, it was hardly possible, could reverence a man like this: — ordinary men might, because they were told that he had defended Christianity against the vile blasphemers and impotent theomichrists of the day. But Coleridge had too pure an ideal of a Christian philosopher, derived from the age of the English Titans in theology, to share in that estimate. It is singular enough, and interesting to a man who has ever heard Coleridge talk, but especially to one who has *assisted* (to speak in French phrase) at a talking party between Coleridge and the Bishop, to look back upon an article in the *Quarterly Review*, where, in connection with the Bishop's auto-

* This supposed falsehood respected the sect called Brownists, and occurs in the 'Defensis pro Pop. Anglicano.' The whole charge is a blunder, and rests upon the Bishop's own imperfect knowledge of Latinity.

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biography, some sneers are dropped with regard to the intellectual character of the neighborhood in which he had settled. I have been told, on pretty good authority, that this article was written by the late Dr. Whittaker, of Craven, the topographical antiquarian; a pretty sort of person, doubtless, to assume such a tone, in speaking of a neighborhood so dazzling in its intellectual pretensions, as that region at that time!

The Bishop had fixed his abode on the banks of Windermere. In a small but beautiful park, he had himself raised a plain, but handsome and substantial mansion: Calgarth, or Calgarth Park, was its name. Now, at Keswick lived Mr. Southey; twenty miles distant, it is true, but still, for a bishop with a bishop's equipage, not beyond a morning's drive. At Grasmere, about eight miles from Calgarth, were to be found Wordsworth and Coleridge. At Brathay, about four miles from Calgarth, lived Charles Lloyd; and he, far as he was below the others I have mentioned, could not in candor be considered a common man. He was somewhat too *Rousseauish;* but he had, in conversation, very extraordinary powers for analysis of a certain kind, applied to the philosophy of manners, and the most delicate *nuances* of social life; and his translation of 'Alfieri,' together with his own poems, shows him to have been an accomplished scholar. Then, not much above a mile from Calgarth, at his beautiful creation of Elleray, lived Professor Wilson, of whom I need not speak. He, in fact, and Mr. Lloyd, were on the most intimate terms with the Bishop's family. The meanest of these persons was able to have 'taken the conceit' out of Mr. Dr. Whittaker, and all his tribe. But even in the town of Kendal, about nine miles from Calgarth, there were many men of information, at least as extensive as Dr. Watson's, and amply qualified to have met him upon

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equal terms in conversation. Mathematics, it is well known, are extensively cultivated in the north of England. Sedburgh, for many years, was a sort of nursery or rural Chapel-of-ease, to Cambridge. Gough, the blind mathematician and botanist of Kendal, was known to fame; but many others in that town had accomplishments equal to his; and, indeed, so widely has mathematical knowledge extended itself throughout Northern England, that even amongst the poor weavers, mechanic laborers for their daily bread, the cultivation of the geometrical analysis, in the most refined shape, has long prevailed; of which some accounts have been recently published. Some local pique, therefore, must have been at the bottom of Dr. Whittaker's sneer. At all events, it was ludicrously contrasted with the true state of the case, as brought out by the meeting between Coleridge and the Bishop.

Coleridge was armed, at all points, with the scholastic erudition which bore upon all questions that could arise in polemic divinity. The philosophy of ancient Greece, through all its schools, the philosophy of the Schoolmen, technically so called, church history, &c., Coleridge had within his call. Having been personally acquainted, or connected as a pupil, with Eichhorn and Michaelis, he knew the whole cycle of schisms and audacious speculations, through which Biblical criticism, or Christian philosophy, has revolved in Modern Germany. All this was ground upon which the Bishop of Llandaff trode with the infirm footing of a child. He listened to what Coleridge reported with the same sort of pleasurable surprise, alternating with starts of doubt or incredulity, as would naturally attend a detailed report from Laputa, — which aerial region of speculation does but too often recur to a sober-minded person, in reading of the endless freaks in philoso-

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phy of modern Germany, where the sceptre of Mutability, the potentate celebrated by Spenser, gathers more trophies in a year, than elsewhere in a century; 'the anarchy of dreams' presiding in her philosophy; and the restless elements of opinion, throughout every region of debate, moulding themselves eternally, like the billowy sands of the desert, as beheld by Bruce, into towering columns, that soar upwards to a giddy altitude, then stalk about for a minute, all a-glow with fiery color, and finally unmould and 'dislimn,' with a collapse as sudden as the motions of that eddying breeze, under which their vapory architecture arose. Hartley and Locke, both of whom the Bishop made into idols, were discussed; especially the former, against whom Coleridge alleged some of those arguments which he has used in his *Biographia Literaria.* The Bishop made but a feeble defence; and, upon some points, none at all. He seemed, I remember, much struck with one remark of Coleridge's, to this effect: — 'That, whereas Hartley fancied that our very reasoning was an aggregation, collected together under the law of association; on the contrary, we reason by counteracting that law, — just, said he, as in leaping, the law of gravitation concurs to that act in its latter part; but no leap could take place were it not by a counteraction of the law.' One remark of the Bishop's let me into the secret of his very limited reading. Coleridge had used the word 'apperception;' — apparently without intention; for, on hearing some objection to the word, as being 'surely not a word that Addison would have used,' he silently substituted another word. Some months afterwards, going with Charles Lloyd to call at Calgarth, during the time when *The Friend* was appearing, the Bishop again noticed this obnoxious word, and in the very same terms: — 'Now, this word *apperception*, which Mr. Coleridge uses in the

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last number of *The Friend*, surely, surely it would not have been approved by Addison; no, Mr. Lloyd, nor by Swift; nor even, I think, by Arbuthnot.' Somebody suggested that the word was a new word of German mintage, and most probably due to Kant, — of whom the Bishop seemed never to have heard. Meantime the fact was, and to me an amusing one, that the word had been commonly used by Leibnitz, — who is really a *classical* author on such subjects.

In the autumn of 1810, Coleridge left the Lakes; and — so far as I am aware — for ever. I once, indeed, heard a rumor of his having passed through with some party of tourists, — some reason struck me, at the time, for believing it untrue, — but, at all events, he never returned to them as a resident. What might be his reason for this eternal self-banishment from scenes which he so well understood in all their shifting forms of beauty, I can only guess. Perhaps it was the very opposite reason to that which is most obvious: not possibly because he had become indifferent to their attractions, but because his undecaying sensibility to their commanding power, had become associated with too afflicting remembrances, and flashes of personal recollections, suddenly restored and illuminated, — recollections which will

> 'Sometimes leap
> From hiding places ten years deep,'

and bring into collision the present with some long-forgotten past, in a form too trying and too painful for endurance. I have a brilliant Scotch friend, who cannot walk on the seashore, — within sight of its *αριθμον γελασμα*, the multitudinous laughter of its waves, or within hearing of its resounding uproar, because they bring up, by links of old association, too insupportably to his mind,

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the agitations of his glittering, but too fervid youth. There is a feeling, — morbid it may be, but for which no anodyne is found in all the schools from Plato to Kant, — to which the human mind is liable at times: it is best described in a little piece by Henry More, the Platonist. He there represents himself as a martyr to his own too passionate sense of beauty, and his consequent too passionate sense of its decay. Everywhere, — above, below, around him, in the earth, in the clouds, in the fields, and in their garniture of flowers,' — he beholds a beauty carried to excess; and this beauty becomes a source of endless affliction to him, because everywhere he sees it liable to the touch of decay and mortal change. During one paroxysm of this sad passion, an angel appears to comfort him; and, by the sudden revelation of her immortal beauty, does, in fact, suspend his grief. But it is only a suspension; for the sudden recollection that her privileged condition, and her exemption from the general fate of beauty, is only by way of exception to a universal rule, restores his grief: 'And thou thyself,' he says to the angel, —

> 'And thou thyself, that com'st to comfort me,
> Wouldst strong occasion of deep sorrow bring,
> If thou wert subject to mortality!'

Every man, who has ever dwelt with passionate love upon the fair face of some female companion through life, must have had the same feeling; and must often, in the exquisite language of Shakspeare's sonnets, have commended and adjured all-conquering Time, there, at least, and upon that one tablet of his adoration,

> 'To write no wrinkle with his antique hand.'

Vain prayer! Empty adjuration! Profitless rebellion

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against the laws which season all things for the inexorable grave! Yet not the less we rebel again and again; and, though wisdom counsels resignation and submission, yet our human passions, still cleaving to their object, force us into endless rebellion. Feelings, the same in kind as these, attach themselves to our mental powers, and our vital energies. Phantoms of lost power, sudden intuitions, and shadowy restorations of forgotten feelings, sometimes dim and perplexing, sometimes by bright but furtive glimpses, sometimes by a full and steady revelation, overcharged with light, — throw us back in a moment upon scenes and remembrances that we have left full thirty years behind us. In solitude, and chiefly in the solitudes of nature; and, above all, amongst the great and *enduring* features of nature, such as mountains and quiet dells, and the lawny recesses of forests, and the silent shores of lakes, features with which (as being themselves less liable to change) our feelings have a more abiding association — under these circumstances it is, that such evanescent hauntings of our past and forgotten selves are most apt to startle and to waylay us. These are *positive* torments from which the agitated mind shrinks in fear; but there are others *negative* in their nature, that is, blank mementos of power extinct, and of faculties burnt out within us. And from both forms of anguish — from this twofold scourge — poor Coleridge fled, perhaps, in flying from the beauty of external nature. In alluding to this latter, or negative form of suffering, — that form, I mean, which presents not the too fugitive glimpses of past power, but its blank annihilation, — Coleridge himself most beautifully insists upon, and illustrates the truth, that all which we find in nature must be created by ourselves; and that alike, whether Nature is so gorgeous in her beauty as to seem

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apparelled in her wedding garment, or so powerless and extinct as to seem palled in her shroud, — in either case,

'O, Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in *our* life alone does nature *live ;*
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud.
'It were a vain endeavor,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from *outward* forms to win
The passion and the life whose fountains are *within.*'

This was one, and the most common shape of extinguished power, from which Coleridge fled to the great city. But sometimes the same decay came back upon his heart in the more poignant shape of intimations, and vanishing glimpses, recovered for one moment from the paradise of youth, and from fields of joy and power, over which, for him, too certainly, he felt that the cloud of night had settled for ever. Both modes of the same torment exiled him from nature ; and for the same reason he fled from poetry and all commerce with his own soul ; burying himself in the profoundest abstractions, from life and human sensibilities.

'For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient all I can ;
And haply *by abstruse research to steal,*
From my own nature, all the natural man:
This was my sole resource, my only plan ;
Till that which suits a part, infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.'

Such were, doubtless, the true and radical causes, which, for the final twenty-four years of Coleridge's life, drew him away from those scenes of natural beauty in which only, at an earlier stage of life, he found strength and restoration. These were the *causes ;* but the imme-

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diate *occasion* of his departure from the Lakes, in the autumn of 1800, was the favorable opportunity then presented to him of migrating in a pleasant way. Mr. Basil Montagu, the Chancery barrister, happened at that time to be returning to London with Mrs. Montagu, from a visit to the Lakes, or to Wordsworth. His travelling carriage was roomy enough to allow of his offering Coleridge a seat in it; and his admiration of Coleridge was just then fervent enough to prompt a friendly wish for that sort of close connection, — viz., by domestication as a guest under Mr. Basil Montagu's roof, — which is the most trying to friendship, and which, in this instance, led to a perpetual rupture of it. The domestic habits of eccentric men of genius, much more those of a man so irreclaimably irregular as Coleridge, can hardly be supposed to promise very auspiciously for any connection so close as this. A very extensive house and household, together with the unlimited license of action which belongs to the *ménage* of some great Dons amongst the nobility, could alone have made Coleridge an inmate perfectly desirable. Probably many little jealousies and offences had been mutually suppressed; but the particular spark which at length fell amongst the combustible materials already prepared, and thus produced the final explosion, took the following shape: — Mr. Montagu had published a book against the use of wine and intoxicating liquors of every sort. Not out of parsimony, or under any suspicion of inhospitality, but in mere self-consistency and obedience to his own conscientious scruples, Mr. Montagu would not countenance the use of wine at his own table. So far, all was right. But doubtless, on such a system, under the known habits of modern life, it should have been made a rule to ask no man to dinner: for to force men, without warning, to a *single* (and,

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therefore, thoroughly useless) act of painful abstinence, is what neither I nor any man can have a right to do. In point of sense, it is, in fact, precisely the freak of Sir Roger De Coverley, who drenches his friend the *Spectator* with a hideous decoction: not, as his confiding visiter had supposed, for some certain and immediate benefit to follow, but simply as having a *tendency* (if well supported by many years' continuance of similar drenches) to abate the remote contingency of the stone. One day's abstinence could do no good on any scheme; and no man was likely to offer himself for a second. However, such being the law of the castle, and that law well known to Coleridge, he, nevertheless, thought fit to ask to dinner Colonel, then Captain Pasley, of the Engineers, well known in those days for his book on the Military Policy of England; and since, for his System of Professional Instruction. Now, where or in what land, abides that

'Captain, or Colonel, or Knight in arms,'

to whom wine in the analysis of dinner is a neutral or indifferent element? Wine, therefore, as it was not of a nature to be omitted, Coleridge took care to furnish at his own private cost. And so far, again, all was right. But, why must Coleridge give his dinner to the Captain in Mr. Montagu's house? There lay the affront; and, doubtless, it was a very inconsiderate act on the part of Coleridge. I report the case simply as it was then generally borne upon the breath, not of scandal, but of jest and merriment. The result, however, was no jest; for bitter words ensued — words that festered in the remembrance; and a rupture between the parties followed, which no reconciliation ever healed.

Meantime, on reviewing this story, as generally adopted by the learned in literary scandal, one demur rises up.

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Dr. Parr, a lisping old dotard, without dignity or power of mind of any sort, was a frequent and privileged inmate at Mr. Montagu's. Him, now, this Parr, there was no conceivable motive for enduring; that point is satisfactorily settled by the pompous inanities of his works. Yet, on the other hand, his habits were in their own nature far less endurable; for the monster smoked;— and how? How did the 'Birmingham Doctor' smoke? Not as you or I, or other civilized people smoke, with a gentle cigar, — but with shag tobacco. And those who know how that abomination lodges and nestles in the draperies of window curtains, will guess the horror and detestation in which the old Whig's memory is held by all enlightened women.

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CHAPTER IX.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

From Mr. Montagu's, Coleridge passed, by favor of what introduction I never heard, into a family as amiable in manners and as benign in disposition, as I remember to have ever met with. On this excellent family I look back with threefold affection, on account of their goodness to Coleridge, and because they were then unfortunate, and because their union has long since been dissolved by death. The family was composed of three members: of Mr. M———, once a lawyer, who had, however, ceased to practise; of Mrs. M———, his wife, a blooming young woman, distinguished for her fine person; and a young lady, her unmarried sister. Here, for some years, I used to visit Coleridge; and, doubtless, as far as situation merely, and the most delicate attentions from the most amiable woman, *could* make a man happy, he must have been so at this time; for both the ladies treated him as an elder brother, or as a father. At length, however, the cloud of misfortune, which had long settled upon the prospects of this excellent family, thickened; and I found, upon one of my visits to London, that they had given up their house in Berners Street, and had retired to a cottage in Wiltshire. Coleridge had accompanied them; and there I visited them myself, and, as it eventually proved, for the last time. Some time after this, I heard from Coleridge, with the deepest sorrow, that poor M———

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had been thrown into prison, and had sunk under the pressure of his misfortunes. The gentle ladies of his family had retired to remote friends; and I saw them no more, though often vainly making inquiries about them.

Coleridge, during this part of his London life, I saw constantly — generally once a day, during my own stay in London; and sometimes we were jointly engaged to dinner parties. In particular, I remember one party at which we met Lady Hamilton — Lord Nelson's Lady Hamilton — the beautiful, the accomplished, the enchantress! Coleridge admired her, as who would not have done, prodigiously; and she, in her turn, was fascinated with Coleridge. He was unusually effective in his display; and she, by way of expressing her acknowledgments appropriately, performed a scene in Lady Macbeth — how splendidly, I cannot better express, than by saying that all of us who then witnessed her performance, were familiar with Mrs. Siddons's matchless execution of that scene; and yet, with such a model filling our imaginations, we could not but acknowledge the possibility of another, and a different perfection, without a trace of imitation, equally original, and equally astonishing. The word 'magnificent' is, in this day, most lavishly abused: daily I hear or read in the newspapers of magnificent objects, as though scattered more thickly than blackberries; but for my part I have seen few objects really deserving that epithet. Lady Hamilton was one of them. She had Medea's beauty — and Medea's power of enchantment. But let not the reader too credulously suppose her the unprincipled woman she has been described. I know of no sound reason for supposing the connection between Lord Nelson and her to have been other than perfectly virtuous. Her public services, I am sure, were most eminent — for *that*, we have indisputable authority;

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and equally sure I am that they were requited with rank ingratitude.

After the household of the poor M———s had been dissolved, I know not whither Coleridge went immediately: for I did not visit London until some years had elapsed. In 1823–24, I first understood that he had taken up his residence as a guest with Mr. Gillman, a surgeon, in Highgate. He had then probably resided for some time at that gentleman's: there he continued to reside on the same terms, I believe, of affectionate friendship with the members of Mr. Gillman's family, as had made life endurable to him in the time of the M———s; and there he died in July of the present year. If, generally speaking, poor Coleridge had but a small share of earthly prosperity, in one respect at least, he was eminently favored by Providence: beyond all men who ever perhaps have lived, he found means to engage a constant succession of most faithful friends; and he levied the services of sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, from the hands of strangers — attracted to him by no possible impulses but those of reverence for his intellect, and love for his gracious nature. How, says Wordsworth —

> —— 'How can *he* expect that others should
> Sow for him, reap for *him*, and at his call,
> Love him, who for himself will take no thought at all?'

How can he, indeed? It is most unreasonable to do so: yet this expectation, if Coleridge ought not to have entertained, at all events he realized. Fast as one friend dropped off, another, and another, succeeded: perpetual relays were laid along his path in life, of judicious and zealous supporters; who comforted his days, and smoothed the pillow for his declining age, even when it was beyond all human power to take away the thorns which stuffed it.

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And what *were* those thorns? — and whence derived? That is a question on which I ought to decline speaking, unless I could speak fully. Not, however, to make any mystery of what requires none, the reader will understand, that *originally* his sufferings, and the death within him of all hope — the palsy, as it were, of that which is the life of life, and the heart within the heart — came from opium. But two things I must add — one to explain Coleridge's case, and the other to bring it within the indulgent allowance of equitable judges: — *First*, the sufferings from morbid derangements, originally produced by opium, had very possibly lost that simple character, and had themselves reacted in producing secondary states of disease and irritation, not any longer dependent upon the opium, so as to disappear with its disuse: hence, a more than mortal discouragement to accomplish this disuse, when the pains of self-sacrifice were balanced by no gleams of restorative feeling. Yet, *secondly*, Coleridge did make prodigious efforts to deliver himself from this thraldom; and he went so far at one time in Bristol, to my knowledge, as to hire a man for the express purpose, and armed with the power of resolutely interposing between himself and the door of any druggist's shop. It is true that an authority derived only from Coleridge's will, could not be valid against Coleridge's own counter-determination: he could resume as easily as he could delegate the power. But the scheme did not entirely fail; a man shrinks from exposing to another that infirmity of will which he might else have but a feeble motive for disguising to himself; and the delegated man, the external conscience, as it were, of Coleridge, though destined — in the final resort, if matters came to absolute rupture, and to an obstinate duel, as it were, between himself and his principal — in that extremity to give way,

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yet might have long protracted the struggle, before coming to that sort of *dignus vindice nodus:* and in fact, I know, upon absolute proof, that, before reaching that crisis, the man showed fight; and, faithful to his trust, and comprehending the reasons for it, he declared that if he must yield, he would 'know the reason why.'

Opium, therefore, subject to the explanation I have made, was certainly the original source of Coleridge's morbid feelings, of his debility, and of his remorse. His pecuniary embarrassments pressed as lightly as could well be expected upon him. I have mentioned the annuity of £150 made to him by the two Wedgwoods. One half, I believe, could not be withdrawn, having been left by a regular testamentary bequest. But the other moiety, coming from the surviving brother, was withdrawn on the plea of commercial losses, somewhere, I think, about 1815. That would have been a heavy blow to Coleridge; and assuredly the generosity is not very conspicuous, of having ever suffered an allowance of that nature to be left to the mercy of accident. Either it ought not to have been granted in that shape — viz. as an *annual* allowance, giving ground for expecting its periodical recurrence — or it ought not to have been withdrawn. However, this blow was broken to Coleridge by the bounty of George IV., who placed Coleridge's name in the list of twelve, to whom he granted an annuity of 100 guineas per annum. This he enjoyed so long as that Prince reigned. But at length came a heavier blow than that from Mr. Wedgwood: a new King arose, who knew not Joseph. Yet surely *he* was not a King who could so easily resolve to turn adrift twelve men of letters, many of them most accomplished men, for the sake of appropriating a sum no larger to himself than 1200 guineas — no less to some of them than the total freight of their

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earthly hopes? — No matter: let the deed have been from whose hand it might, it was done: ειργασαι it was perpetrated, as saith the Medea of Euripides; and it will be mentioned hereafter, 'more than either once or twice.' It fell with weight, and with effect upon the latter days of Coleridge; it took from him as much heart and hope as at his years, and with his unworldly prospects, remained for man to blight: and, if it did not utterly crush him, the reason was — because for himself he had never needed much, and was now continually drawing near to that haven, in which, for himself, he would need nothing; secondly, because his children were now independent of his aid; and, finally, because in this land there are men to be found always of minds large enough to comprehend the claims of genius, and with hearts, by good luck, more generous, by infinite degrees, than the hearts of Princes.

Coleridge, as I now understand, was somewhere about sixty-two years of age when he died. This, however, I take upon the report of the public newspapers; for I do not, of my own knowledge, know anything accurately upon that point. * * * *

It can hardly be necessary to inform any reader of discernment or of much practice in composition, that the whole of this article upon Mr. Coleridge, though carried through at intervals, and (as it has unexpectedly happened) with time sufficient to have made it a very careful one, has, in fact, been written in a desultory and unpremeditated style. It was originally undertaken on the sudden but profound impulse communicated to the writer's feelings, by the unexpected news of this great man's death; partly, therefore, to relieve by expressing his own deep sentiments of reverential affection to his memory, and partly, in however imperfect a way, to meet the

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public feeling of interest or curiosity about a man who had long taken his place amongst the intellectual *potentates* of the age. Both purposes required that it should be written almost *extempore:* the greater part was really and unaffectedly written in that way, and under circumstances of such extreme haste, as would justify the writer in pleading the very amplest privilege of license and indulgent construction which custom concedes to such cases. Hence it had occurred to the writer, as a judicious principle, to create a sort of merit out of his own necessity; and rather to seek after the graces which belong to the epistolary form, or to other modes of composition professedly careless, than after those which grow out of preconceived biographies, which, having originally settled their plan upon a regular foundation, are able to pursue a course of orderly development, such as *his* slight sketch had voluntarily renounced from the beginning. That mode of composition having been once adopted, it seemed proper to sustain it, even after delays and interruption had allowed time for throwing the narrative into a more orderly movement, and modulating, as it were, into a key of the usual solemnity. The *qualis ab incepto processerit* — the *ordo* prescribed by the first bars of the music predominated over all other considerations, and to such an extent, that he had purposed to leave the article without any regular termination or summing up — as, on the one hand, scarcely demanded by the character of a sketch so rapid and indigested, whilst, on the other, he was sensible that anything of so much pretension as a formal peroration, challenged a sort of consideration to the paper which it was the author's chief wish to disclaim. That effect, however, is sufficiently parried by the implied protest now offered; and, on other reasons, it is certainly desirable that a general glance, however cursory, should

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be thrown over the intellectual claims of Mr. Coleridge, by one who knew him so well, and especially in a case where those very claims constitute the entire and sole justification of the preceding personal memoir. That which furnishes the whole moving reason for any separate notice at all, and forms its whole latent interest, ought not, in mere logic, to be left without some notice itself, though as rapidly executed as the previous biographical sketch, and, from the necessity of the subject, by many times over more imperfect.

To this task, therefore, the writer now addresses himself; and, by way of gaining greater freedom of movement, and of resuming his conversational tone, he will here again take the liberty of speaking in the first person.

If Mr Coleridge had been merely a scholar — merely a philologist — or merely a man of science — there would be no reason apparent for travelling in our survey beyond the field of his intellect, rigorously and narrowly so called. But because he was a poet, and because he was a philosopher, in a comprehensive and a most *human* sense, with whose functions the moral nature is so largely interwoven, I shall feel myself entitled to notice the most striking aspects of his *character*, (using that word in its common limited meaning,) of his disposition, and his manners, as so many reflex indications of his intellectual constitution. But let it be well understood that I design nothing elaborate, nothing comprehensive or ambitious: my purpose is merely to supply a few hints and suggestions drawn from a very hasty retrospect, by way of adding a few traits to any outline which the reader may have framed to himself, either from some personal knowledge, or from more full and lively memorials.

One character, in which Mr. Coleridge most often came

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before the public, was that of politician. In this age of fervent partisanship, it will, therefore, naturally occur as a first question, to inquire after his party and political connections: was he Whig, Tory, or Radical? Or, under a new classification, were his propensities Conservative or Reforming? I answer that, in any exclusive or emphatic sense, he was none of these; because, as a philosopher, he was, according to circumstances, and according to the object concerned, all of these by turns. These are distinctions upon which a cloud of delusion rests. It would not be difficult to show, that in the speculations built upon the distinction of Whig and Tory, even by as philosophic a politician as Edmund Burke, there is an oversight of the largest practical importance. But the general and partisan use of these terms superadds to this πρωτον Ψευδος a second which is much more flagrant. It is this: the terms Whig or Tory, used by partisans, are taken *extra gradum*, as expressing the ideal or extreme cases of the several creeds; whereas, in actual life, few such cases are found realized, by far the major part of those who answer to either one or the other denomination making only an approximation (differing by infinite degrees) to the ideal or abstract type. A third error there is, relating to the actual extent of the several denominations, even after every allowance made for the faintest approximations. Listen to a Whig, or to a Tory, and you will suppose that the great bulk of society range under his banner; all, at least, who have any property at stake. Listen to a Radical, and you will suppose that all are marshalled in the same ranks with himself, unless those who have some private interest in existing abuses, or have aristocratic privileges to defend. Yet, upon going extensively into society as it is, you find that a vast majority of good citizens are of no party whatsoever, own

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no party designation, care for no party interest, but carry their good wishes by turns to men of every party, according to the momentary purpose they are pursuing. As to Whig and Tory, it is pretty clear that only two classes of men, both of limited extent, acknowledge these as their distinctions; first, those who make politics in some measure their profession or trade — whether by standing forward habitually in public meetings as leaders or as assistants, or by writing books and pamphlets in the same cause; secondly, those whose rank, or birth, or position in a city, or a rural district, almost pledge them to a share in the political struggles of the day, under the penalty of being held *fainéans*, truants, or even malignant recusants, if they should decline a warfare which often, perhaps, they do not love in secret. These classes, which, after all, are not numerous, and not entirely sincere, compose the whole extent of professing Whigs and Tories who make any approach to the standards of their two churches; and, generally speaking, these persons have succeeded to their politics and their party ties, as they have to their estates, viz.: by inheritance. Not their way of thinking in politics has dictated their party connections; but these connections, traditionally bequeathed from one generation to another, have dictated their politics.

With respect to the Radical or the Reformer, the case is otherwise; for, it is certain, that in this, as in every great and enlightened nation, enjoying an intense and fervid communication of thought through the press, there is, and must be, a tendency widely diffused to the principles of sane reform — an anxiety to probe and examine all the institutions of the land by the increasing lights of the age — and a salutary determination that no acknowledged abuse shall be sheltered by prescription, or privileged by its antiquity. In saying, therefore, that *his*

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principles are spread over the length and breadth of the land, the Reformer says no more than the truth. *Whig* and *Tory*, as usually understood, express only two modes of aristocratic partisanship: and it is strange, indeed, to find people deluded by the notion that the reforming principle has any more natural connection with the first than the last. *Reformer*, on the other hand, to a certain extent, expresses the political creed and aspect of almost every enlightened citizen: but, then, how? Not, as the *Radical* would insinuate, as pledging a man to a specific set of objects, or to any visible and apparent party, having known leaders and settled modes of action. British society, in its large majority, may be fairly described as *Reformers*, in the sense of being favorably disposed to a general spirit of ventilation and reform carried through all departments of public business, political or judicial; but it is so far from being, therefore, true that men, in general, are favorably disposed to any known party, in or out of Parliment, united for certain objects and by certain leaders, that, on the contrary, this reforming party itself has no fixed unity, and no generally acknowledged heads. It is divided both as to persons and as to things: the ends to be pursued create as many schisms, as the course of means proper for the pursuit, and the choice of agents for conducting the public wishes. In fact, it would be even more difficult to lay down the ideal standard of a Reformer, or his abstract creed, than of a Tory; and supposing this done, it would be found, in practice, that the imperfect approximations to the pure faith would differ by even broader shades, as regarded the reforming creed, than as regarded that of the rigorous or ultra Tory.

With respect to Mr. Coleridge, he was certainly a friend to all enlightened reforms; he was a friend, for example,

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to Reform in Parliament. Sensible, as he was, of the prodigious diffusion of knowledge and good sense amongst the classes immediately below the gentry in British society, he could not but acknowledge their right to a larger and a less indirect share of political influence. As to the plan, and its extent, and its particular provisions, upon those he hesitated and wavered; as other friends to the same views have done, and will continue to do. The only *avowed* objects of modern Reformers which he would strenuously have opposed, nay, would have opposed with the zeal of an ancient martyr, are those which respect the Church of England, and, therefore, most of those which respect the two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. There he would have been found in the first ranks of the Anti-Reformers. He would also have supported the House of Peers as the tried bulwark of our social interests in many a famous struggle, and sometimes, in the hour of need, the sole barrier against despotic aggressions on the one hand, and servile submissions on the other. Moreover, he looked with favor upon many modes of aristocratic influence as balances to new-made commercial wealth, and to a far baser tyranny likely to arise from that quarter when unbalanced. But allowing for these points of difference, I know of little else stamped with the general seal of modern reform, and claiming to be a privileged object for a national effort, which would not have had his countenance. It is true, and this I am sensible will be objected, that his party connections were chiefly with the Tories; and it adds a seeming strength to this objection, that these connections were not those of accident, nor those which he inherited, nor those of his youthful choice. They were sought out by himself, and in his maturer years; or else they were such as sought *him* for the sake of his political principles; and equally,

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in either case, they argued some affinity in his political creed. This much cannot be denied. But one consideration will serve greatly to qualify the inference from these facts. In those years when Mr. Coleridge became connected with Tories, what was the predominating and cardinal principle of Toryism, in comparison with which all else was willingly slighted? Circumstances of position had thrown upon the Tories the *onus* of a great national struggle, the greatest which history anywhere records, and with an enemy the most deadly. The Whigs were then out of power: they were therefore in opposition; and that one fact, the simple fact of holding an anti-ministerial position, they allowed, by a most fatal blunder, to determine the course of their foreign politics. Napoleon was to be cherished simply because he was a thorn in Mr. Pitt's side. So began their foreign policy — and in that pettiest of personal views. Because they were anti-ministerial, they allowed themselves passively to become anti-national. To be a Whig, therefore, in those days, implied little more than a strenuous opposition to foreign war — to be a Tory, pledged a man to little more than war with Napoleon Bonaparte.

And this view of our foreign relations it was that connected Coleridge with Tories, — a view which arose upon no motives of selfish interest, (as too often has been said in reproach,) but upon the changes wrought in the spirit of the French Republic, which gradually transmuted its defensive warfare (framed originally to meet a conspiracy of kings crusading against the new-born democracy of French institutions, whilst yet in their cradle) into a warfare of aggression and sanguinary ambition. The military strength evoked in France by the madness of European kings, had taught her the secret of her own power — a secret too dangerous for a nation of vanity so

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infinite, and so feeble in all means of moral self-restraint. The temptation to foreign conquest was too strong for the national principles; and, in this way, all that had been grand and pure in the early pretensions of French Republicanism rapidly melted away before the common bribes of vulgar ambition. Unoffending states, such as Switzerland, were the first to be trampled under foot; no voice was heard any more but the 'brazen throat of war;' and after all that had been vaunted of a golden age, and a long career opened to the sceptre of pure political justice, the clouds gathered more gloomily than ever; and the sword was once more reinstated, as the sole arbiter of right, with less disguise and less reserve than under the vilest despotism of kings. The change was in the French Republicans, not in their foreign admirers: they, in mere consistency, were compelled into corresponding changes, and into final alienation of sympathy, as they beheld, one after one, all titles forfeited, by which that grand explosion of pure democracy had originally challenged and sustained their veneration. The mighty Republic had now begun to revolve through those fierce transmigrations foreseen by Burke, to every one of which, by turns, he had denounced an inevitable 'purification by fire and blood:' no trace remained of her primitive character: and of that awful outbreak of popular might, which once had made France the land of hope and promise to the whole human race, and had sounded a knell to every form of oppression or abuse, no record was to be found, except in the stupendous power which cemented its martial oligarchy. Of the people, of the democracy — or that it had ever for an hour been roused from its slumbers — one sole evidence remained; and that lay in the blank power of destruction, and its perfect organization, which none but a popular movement, no power short of that,

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could have created. The people having been unchained, and, as if for the single purpose of creating a vast system of destroying energies, had then immediately recoiled within their old limits, and themselves become the earliest victim of their own stratocracy. In this way France had become an object of jealousy and alarm. It remained to see to what purpose she would apply her new energies. That was soon settled; her new-born power was wielded from the first by unprincipled and by ambitious men; and, in 1800, it fell under the permanent control of an autocrat, whose unity of purpose, and iron will, left no room for any hope of change.

Under these circumstances, under these prospects, coupled with this retrospect, what became the duty of all foreign politicians? of the English above all, as natural leaders in any hopeful scheme of resistance? The question can scarcely be put with decency. Time and season, place or considerations of party, all alike vanished before an elementary duty to the human race, which much transcended any duty of exclusive patriotism. Plant it, however, on that narrower basis, and the answer would have been the same for all centuries, and for every land under a corresponding state of circumstances. Of Napoleon's real purposes there cannot *now* be any reasonable doubt. His confessions — and, in particular, his indirect revelations at St. Helena — have long since removed all demurs or scruples of scepticism. For England, therefore, as in relation to a man bent upon her ruin, all distinctions of party were annihilated — Whig and Tory were merged and swallowed up in the transcendent duties of patriots — Englishmen — lovers of liberty. Tories, *as* Tories, had here no peculiar or separate duties — none which belonged to their separate creed in politics. Their duties were paramount; and their partisanship had here

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no application — was perfectly indifferent, and spoke neither this way or that. In one respect only they had peculiar duties, and a peculiar responsibility; peculiar, however, not by any difference of quality, but in its supreme degree; the same duties which belonged to all, belonged to them by a heavier responsibility. And how, or why? Not *as* Tories had they, or could they have any functions at all applying to this occasion; it was as being then the ministerial party, as the party accidentally in power at the particular crisis: in *that* character it was that they had any separate or higher degree of responsibility; otherwise, and as to the *kind* of their duty apart from this degree, the Tories stood in the same circumstances as men of all other parties. To the Tories, however, as accidentally in possession of the supreme power, and wielding the national forces at that time, and directing their application — to them it was that the honor belonged of making a beginning: on them had devolved the privilege of opening and authorizing the dread crusade. How, and in what spirit they acquitted themselves of that most enviable task — enviable for its sanctity — fearful for the difficulty of its adequate fulfilment — how they persevered — and whether, at any crisis, the direst and most ominous to the righteous cause, they faltered or gave sign of retreating — history will tell — history has already told.

To the Whigs belonged the duty of seconding their old antagonists: and no wise man could have doubted, that, in a case of transcendent patriotism, where none of those principles could possibly apply, by which the two parties were divided and distinguished, the Whigs would be anxious to show that, for the interests of their common country, they could cheerfully lay aside all those party distinctions, and forget those feuds which now had no

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pertinence or meaning. Simply as Whigs, had they stood in no other relation, they probably would have done so. Unfortunately, however, for their own good name and popularity in after times, they were divided from the other party, not merely as Whigs opposed to Tories, but also upon another and a more mortifying distinction, which was not, like the first, a mere inert question of speculation or theory, but involved a vast practical difference of honors and emoluments: — they were divided, I say, on another and more vexatious principle, as the *Outs* opposed to the *Ins*. Simply as Whigs, they might have coalesced with the Tories *quoad hoc*, and merely for this one purpose. But as men *out* of power, they could not coalesce with those who were *in*. They constituted 'his Majesty's Opposition;' and, in a fatal hour, they determined that it was fitting to carry on their general scheme of hostility even into this sacred and privileged ground. That resolution once taken, they found it necessary to pursue it with zeal. The case itself was too weighty and too interesting to allow of any moderate tone for the abetters or opposers. Passion and personal bitterness soon animated the contest: violent and rash predictions were hazarded — prophecies of utter ruin and of captivity for our whole army were solemnly delivered: and it soon became evident, as indeed mere human infirmity made it beforehand but too probable, that where so much personal credit was at stake upon the side of our own national dishonor, the wishes of the prophet had been pledged to the same result as the credit of his political sagacity. Many were the melancholy illustrations of the same general case. Men were seen fighting against the evidences of some great British victory with all the bitterness and fierce incredulity which usually meet the first rumors of some private calamity: that was in

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effect the aspect in their eyes of each national triumph in its turn. Their position, connected with the unfortunate election made by the Whig leaders of their tone, from the very opening of the contest, gave the character of a calamity for them and for their party, to that which to every other heart in Britain was the noblest of triumphs in the noblest of causes; and, as a party, the Whigs mourned for years over those events which quickened the pulses of pleasure and sacred exultation in every other heart. God forbid that all Whigs should have felt in this unnatural way! I speak only of the tone set by the Parliamentary leaders. The few who were in Parliament, and exposed to daily taunts from the just exultation of their irritated opponents, had their natural feelings poisoned and envenomed. The many who were out of Parliament, and not personally interested in this warfare of the Houses, were left open to natural influences of patriotic pride, and to the contagion of public sympathy: and these, though Whigs, felt as became them.

These are things too unnatural to be easily believed; or, in a land where the force of partisanship is less, to be easily understood. Being true, however, they ought not to be forgotten: and at present it is almost necessary that they should be stated for the justification of Coleridge. Too much has been written upon this part of his life, and too many reproaches thrown out upon his levity or his want of principle in his supposed sacrifice of his early political connections, to make it possible for any reverencer of Coleridge's memory to pass over the case without a full explanation. That explanation is involved in the strange and scandalous conduct of the Parliamentary Whigs. Coleridge passed over to the Tories only in that sense in which all patriots did so at that time, and in relation to our great *foreign* interest — viz., by

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refusing to accompany the Whigs in their almost perfidious demeanor towards Napoleon Bonaparte. Anti-*ministerial* they affect to style their policy, but in the most eminent sense it was anti-*national*. It was thus far — viz., exclusively, or almost exclusively, in relation to our great feud with Napoleon — that Coleridge adhered to the Tories. But because this feud was so capital and so earth-shaking a quarrel, that it occupied all hearts and all the councils of Christendom, suffering no other question almost to live in its neighborhood, hence it happened that he who acceded to the Tories in this one chapter of their policy, was regarded as an ally in the most general sense. Domestic politics were then, in fact, forgotten; no question, in any proper sense a Tory one, ever arose in that era; or, if it had, the public attention would not have settled upon it; and it would speedily have been dismissed.

Hence I deduce as a possibility, and, from my knowledge of Coleridge, I deduce it as a fact, that his adhesion to the Tories was bounded by his approbation of their foreign policy; and even of *that* — rarely in its executive details, rarely even in its military plans, (for these he assailed with more keenness of criticism than to me the case seemed to justify,) but solely in its animating principle — its moving and sustaining force, viz., the doctrine and entire faith that Napoleon Bonaparte ought to be resisted, was not a proper object of diplomacy or negotiation, and could be resisted hopefully and triumphantly. Thus far he went along with the Tories: in all else he belonged quite as much to other parties — so far as he belonged to any. And that he did not follow any bias of private interest in connecting himself with Tories, or rather in allowing Tories to connect themselves with him, appears (rather more indeed than it ought to have

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appeared) on the very surface of his life. From Tory munificence he drew nothing at all, unless it should be imputed to his Tory connections that George IV. selected him for one of his academicians. But this slight mark of royal favor, he owed, I believe, to other considerations; and I have reason to think that his way of treating political questions, so wide of dogmatism, and laying open so vast a field to scepticism that might else have gone unregarded, must have been held as evidence of too latitudinarian a creed to justify a title to Toryism. And, upon the whole, I am of opinion, that few events of Mr. Coleridge's life were better calculated to place his disinterested pursuit of truth in a luminous aspect. In fact, his carelessness of all worldly interests was too notorious to leave him open to suspicions of that nature: nor was this carelessness kept within such limits as to be altogether meritorious. There is no doubt that his indolence concurred, in some degree, to that line of conduct and to that political reserve which would, at all events, have been pursued, in a degree beyond what honor the severest, or delicacy the most nervous, could have enjoined.

It is a singular anecdote, after all, to report of Coleridge, who incurred the reproach of having *ratted* solely by his inability to follow the friends of his early days into what his heart regarded as a monstrous and signal breach of patriotism, that in any eminent sense he was *not* a patriot. His understanding in this, as in many instances, was too active, too restless, for any abiding feelings to lay hold of him, unless when they coincided with some palpable command of nature. Parental love, for instance, was too holy a thing to be submitted for an instant to any scrutiny or any jealousy of his hair-splitting understanding. But it must be something as sacred and as profound as that which with Coleridge could long support the

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endless attrition of his too active intellect. In this instance, he had the same defect, derived in part from the same cause, as a contemporary, one of the idols of the day, more celebrated, and more widely celebrated, than Coleridge, but far his inferior in power and compass of intellect. I speak of Goethe: he also was defective, and defective under far stronger provocations and excitement, in patriotic feeling. He cared little for Weimar — and less for Germany. And he was, thus far, much below Coleridge — that the passion, which he could not feel, Coleridge yet obliged himself practically to obey in all things which concerned the world; whereas, Goethe disowned this passion equally in his acts — his words — and his writings. Both are now gone — Goethe and Coleridge; both are honored by those who knew them, and by multitudes who did not. But the honors of Coleridge are perennial, and will annually grow more verdant: whilst from those of Goethe every generation will see something fall away, until posterity will wonder at the subverted idol, whose basis being hollow and unsound, will leave the worship of their fathers an enigma to their descendants.

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CHAPTER X.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

In 1807 it was, at the beginning of winter, that I first saw William Wordsworth. I have already mentioned that I had introduced myself to his notice by letter as early as the spring of 1803. To this hour it has continued, I believe, a mystery to Wordsworth, why it was that I suffered an interval of four and a half years to slip away before availing myself of the standing invitation with which I had been honored to the poet's house. Very probably he accounted for this delay by supposing that the new-born liberty of an Oxford life, with its multiplied enjoyments, acting upon a boy just emancipated from the restraints of a school, and, in one hour, elevated into what we Oxonians so proudly and so exclusively *

* At the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where the town is viewed as a mere ministerial appendage to the numerous colleges — the civic Oxford, for instance, existing for the sake of the academic Oxford, and not *vice versa* — it has naturally happened that the students honor with the name of '*a man*,' him only who wears a cap and gown. The word is not used with any reference to physical powers, or to age; but simply to the final object for which the places are supposed to have first arisen, and to maintain themselves. There is, however, a ludicrous effect produced, in some instances, by the use of this term in contradistinguishing parties. 'Was he a man?' is a frequent question; and *as* frequent in the mouth of a stripling under nineteen, speaking, perhaps, of a huge, elderly tradesman — 'Oh, no! not a man at all.'

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denominate a 'man,' might have tempted me into pursuits alien from the pure intellectual passions which had so powerfully mastered my youthful heart some years before. Extinguished such a passion could not be; nor could he think, if remembering the fervor with which I had expressed it, the sort of 'nympholepsy' which had seized upon me, and which, in some imperfect way, I had avowed with reference to the very origin of lakes and mountains, amongst which the scenery of this most original poetry had chiefly grown up and moved. The very names of the ancient hills — Fairfield, Seat Sandal, Helvellyn, Blencathara, Glaramara; of the sequestered glens — such as Borrowdale, Martindale, Mardale, Wasdale, and Ennerdale; but, above all, the shy pastoral recesses, not garishly in the world's eye, like Windermere or Derwentwater, but lurking half unknown to the traveller of that day — Grasmere, for instance, the lovely abode of the poet himself, solitary, and yet sowed, as it were, with a thin diffusion of humble dwellings — here a scattering, and there a clustering, as in the starry heavens — sufficient to afford, at every turn and angle, human remembrances and memorials of time-honored affections, or of passions, (as the 'Churchyard amongst the Mountains' will amply demonstrate) — not wanting even in scenic and tragical interest: — these were so many local spells upon me, equally poetic and elevating with the Miltonic names of Valdarno and Vallombrosa, whilst, in addition to that part of their power, they had a separate fascination, under the anticipation that very probably I might here form personal ties which would for ever connect me with their sweet solitudes by powers deep as life and awful as death.

Oh! sense of mysterious pre-existence, by which, through years in which as yet a stranger to these valleys

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of Westmoreland, I viewed myself as a phantom-self — a second identity projected from my own consciousness, and already living amongst them! — how was it, and by what prophetic instinct, that already I said to myself oftentimes, when chasing day-dreams along the pictures of these wild mountainous labyrinths, which as yet I had not traversed — Here, in some distant year, I shall be shaken with love, and there with stormiest grief? — whence was it that sudden revelations came upon me, like the drawing-up of a curtain, and closing again as rapidly, of scenes that made the future heaven of my life? — and how was it that in thought I *was* and yet in reality was *not* a denizen, already, in 1803, 1804, 1805, of lakes and forest lawns which I never saw till 1807? — and that, by a prophetic instinct of the heart, I rehearsed and lived over, as it were, in vision, those chapters of my life which have carried with them the weightiest burthen of joy and sorrow, and by the margin of those very lakes and hills with which I prefigured this connection? — and, in short, that for me, by a transcendent privilege, during the noviciate of my life, most truly I might say —

'In To-day already walked To-morrow?'

Deep are the voices which seem to call, deep is the lesson which would be taught even to the most thoughtless of men, by 'any gladsome field of earth' which he may chance to traverse, if (according to the supposition * of Wordsworth) that field, so gay to him,

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* See the divine passage in 'The Excursion,' beginning —

'Ah! what a lesson for a thoughtless man,
If any gladsome field of earth,' &c.

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—— 'could render back the sighs
To which it hath responded;'
—— 'or could echo the sad steps
By which it hath been trod.'

But, if this recall of the real be affecting, much more so to me is this aerial and shadowy anticipation of the future, when looked back upon from far distance through a multitude of years, and when confirmed for the great outlines of its sketches by the impassioned experience of life. *Why* I should have done so, I can hardly say; but that I did — even before I had visited Grasmere, and whilst it was almost certain, from the sort of channel in which my life seemed destined to flow, that London would be the central region of my hopes and fears — even then I turned to Grasmere and its dependencies as knit up, in some way as yet unknown, with my future destinies. Of this, were it not that it would wear a superstitious air, I could mention a very memorable proof from the records of my life in 1804, full three and a half years before I saw Grasmere. However, I allude to that fact in this place by way of showing that Oxford had not weaned my thoughts from the northern mountains and their great inhabitants; and that my delay was due to anything rather than to waning interest. On the contrary, the real cause of my delay was the too great profundity, and the increasing profundity, of my interest in this regeneration of our national poetry; and the increasing awe, in due proportion to the decaying thoughtlessness of boyhood, which possessed me for the character of its author. So far from neglecting Wordsworth, it is a fact (and Professor Wilson — who, without knowing me in those or for many subsequent years, shared my feelings towards both the poetry and the poet — has a story of his own experience somewhat similar, to report) — it

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is a fact, I say, that twice I had undertaken a long journey expressly for the purpose of paying my respects to Wordsworth; twice I came so far as the little rustic inn (at that time the sole inn of the neighborhood) at Church Coniston — the village which stands at the north-western angle of Coniston Water; and on neither occasion could I summon confidence enough to present myself before him. It was not that I had any want of proper boldness for facing the most numerous company of a mixed or ordinary character: reserved indeed I was, and too much so, perhaps even shy — from the character of my mind, so profoundly meditative, and the character of my life, so profoundly sequestered: but still, from counteracting causes, I was not deficient in a reasonable self-confidence towards the world generally. But the very image of Wordsworth, as I prefigured it to my own planet-struck eye, crushed my faculties as before Elijah or St. Paul. Twice, as I have said, did I advance as far as the Lake of Coniston, which is about eight miles from the church of Grasmere, and once I absolutely went forwards from Coniston to the very gorge of Hammerscar, from which the whole vale of Grasmere suddenly breaks upon the view in a style of almost theatrical surprise, with its lovely valley stretching in the distance, the lake lying immediately below, with its solemn boat-like island of five acres in size, seemingly floating on its surface; its exquisite outline on the opposite shore, revealing all its little bays and wild sylvan margin, feathered to the edge with wild flowers and ferns. In one quarter, a little wood, stretching for about half a mile towards the outlet of the lake, more directly in opposition to the spectator; a few green fields; and beyond them, just two bowshots from the water, a little white cottage gleaming from the midst of trees, with a vast and seemingly never-ending

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series of ascents, rising above it to the height of more than three thousand feet. That little cottage was Wordsworth's from the time of his marriage, and earlier — in fact, from the beginning of the century to the year 1808. Afterwards, for many a year, it was mine. Catching one hasty glimpse of this loveliest of landscapes, I retreated like a guilty thing, for fear I might be surprised by Wordsworth, and then returned faint-heartedly to Coniston, and so to Oxford, *re infectâ*.

This was in 1806. And thus far, from mere excess of nervous distrust in my own powers for sustaining a conversation with Wordsworth, I had, for nearly five years, shrunk from a meeting for which, beyond all things under heaven, I longed. These, the reader will say, were foolish feelings. Why, yes; perhaps they were; but they had a laudable foundation; for I carried my modesty to a laughable excess undoubtedly; but yet it *was* modesty which co-operated with other feelings to produce my foolish panic. I had lived in profounder solitude than can have fallen to the lot of many people, which arose from the unusual defect of sympathy I found in all around me; and this solitude gave a preternatural depth to my master feelings, which originally were deep enough; and, to speak phrenologically, the organ of veneration must have received an inordinate development in my case. However, say what one can for it, no doubt my conduct was very absurd; and I began to think so myself. I fancied continually a plain, honest, old relative saying to me — 'Let the man be a god even, he will show himself very little of a good one if he is not satisfied with a devotion such as yours. You offer him almost a blamable adoration. What more can he require? And if more he *does* require, hang me if I wouldn't think myself too good for any man's scorn; and, after one trial

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of it, I would wish him good morning for ever.' Still I witnessed a case where a kind of idol had, after all, rejected an idolator that did not offer a splendid triumph to his pride; and with the additional cruelty of slighting this worshipper in behalf of one more brilliant, who seemed in great doubt whether he should admire or not. And, although I thought better of Mr. Wordsworth's moral nature than to suppose it possible for him to err in this extent, or even with this kind of insolence, yet I could not reconcile myself to the place of an humble admirer, valued, perhaps, for the right direction of his feelings, but practically neglected in behalf of some more gifted companion, who might have the power (which much I feared that I should never have) of talking to him on something like equal terms, as respected the laws and principles of poetry. I could bear well enough to be undervalued, or even openly scorned; for, said I to myself, it is the lot of every man in this world to be scorned by somebody; and also, to balance that misfortune, every man has a chance of one worshipper. 'I,' says Sir Andrew Aguecheek — 'I was adored once.' Yes, even Aguecheek had his one adorer; and there is not that immeasurable fool in this world, but that (according to La Fontaine's consolatory doctrine) he has a fair chance for finding '*un plus grand sot que luimême.*'

But with all this equanimity in my expectation and demands, philosophically as I could have reconciled myself to contempt, there was a limit. People there were in this world whose respect I could not dispense with: people also there *have been* in this world (alas! alas!) whose love was to me no less indispensable. Have it I must, or life would have had no value in my eyes. Was I then so deficient in conversational power that I could not hope to acquit myself respectably? In

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that respect, it is a singularity in which (if I may presume, even for a defect, to compare myself with so great a man) I resembled Wordsworth — namely, that in early youth I labored under a peculiar embarrassment and penury of words, when I sought to convey my thoughts adequately upon interesting subjects: neither was it words only that I wanted; but I could not unravel, I could not even make perfectly conscious to myself, or properly arrange the subsidiary thoughts into which one leading thought often radiates; or, at least, I could not do this with anything like the rapidity requisite for conversation. I labored like a Sibyl instinct with the burden of prophetic wo, as often as I found myself dealing with any topic in which the understanding combined with deep feelings to suggest mixed and tangled thoughts: and thus partly — partly also from my invincible habit of reverie — at that era of my life, I had a most distinguished talent '*pour le silence.* Wordsworth, from something of the same causes, suffered (by his own report to myself) at the same age from pretty much the same infirmity. And yet, in more advanced years — probably about twenty-eight or thirty — both of us acquired a remarkable fluency in the art of unfolding our thoughts colloquially. However, at that period my deficiencies were what I have described. And after all, though I had no absolute cause for anticipating contempt, I was so far right in my fears, that since that time I have had occasion to perceive a worldly tone of sentiment in Wordsworth, not less than in Mrs. Hannah More and other literary people, by which they were led to set a higher value upon a limited respect from a person high in the world's esteem, than upon the most lavish spirit of devotion from an obscure quarter. Now, in that point, my feelings are far otherwise; and, though it is praising myself to say so, yet say it I must, because it is mere

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truth — that, if a fool were so far to honor me as to profess, in Sir Andrew Aguecheek's phrase, even to 'adore' me — yes, though it were Sir Andrew himself — I should say, 'My poor fool! thy adoration will do me but little good in this world; yet, to know that thy whole heart's wealth is given up to me, that forces me to value thy homage more than I would that of Solomon in all his glory.'

Meantime, the world went on; events kept moving: and, amongst them, in the course of 1807, occurred the event of Mr. Coleridge's return to England from his official station in the Governor's family at Malta; my introduction to his acquaintance at Bridgewater, where he was then (summer of 1807) visiting, together with his family, amongst old Somersetshire friends; his subsequent journey to Bristol, near which (at the Hot Wells) I was then staying with a female relation; and, finally, upon discovering that he was anxious to put his wife and children under some friendly escort, on their return homewards to Keswick, (he himself being summond to execute an engagement to lecture at the Royal Institution during the coming winter,) I offered to unite with Mrs. Coleridge in a post-chaise to the north. My offer was readily accepted, and, at the latter end of October, we set forwards — Mrs. Coleridge, viz., with her two surviving sons — Hartley, aged nine, the oldest; Derwent, about seven — her beautiful little daughter, about five; and, finally, myself. Going by the direct route through Gloucester, Bridgewater, &c., on the third day we reached Liverpool, where I took up my quarters at a hotel, whilst Mrs. Coleridge paid a visit of a few days to a very interesting family, friends of Southey. These were the Misses Koster, daughters of an English gold merchant of celebrity, who had recently quitted Portugal on the approach of the French army

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under Junot. Mr. Koster did me the honor to call at my quarters, and invite me to his house; an invitation which I very readily accepted, and had thus an opportunity of becoming acquainted with a family the most accomplished I had ever known. At dinner, there appeared only the family party, several daughters, and one son, a fine young man of twenty, but who was *consciously* dying of asthma. Mr. Koster, the head of the family, was distinguished for his good sense and practical information; but, in Liverpool, still more so by his eccentric and obstinate denial of certain notorious events; in particular, he denied that any such battle as Talavera had ever been fought, and had a large wager depending upon the result. His house was the resort of distinguished foreigners; and, on the first evening of my dining there, as well as afterwards, I there met, for the first time and for the last, that marvel of women, Madame Catalani. I had heard her repeatedly; but never before been near enough to see her smile and converse — even to be honored with a smile myself. She and Lady Hamilton were the most effectively brilliant women I ever saw. However, on this occasion, the Misses Koster outshone even la Catalani; to her they talked in the most fluent Italian; to some foreign men, in Portuguese; to one, in French; and to most of the party in English; and each, by turns, seemed to be their native tongue. Nor did they shrink, even in the presence of the mighty enchantress and syren, from exhibiting their musical skill.

From Liverpool, after about a week's delay, we pursued our journey northwards. We had slept on the first day at Lancaster. Consequently, at the rate of motion which then prevailed throughout England — which, however, was rarely equalled on that road, where all things were in arrear by comparison with the eastern and southern roads

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of the kingdom — we naturally enough found ourselves, about three o'clock in the afternoon, at Ambleside, fourteen miles to the north of Kendal, and thirty-six from our sleeping quarters. There, for the last time, we stopped to change horses, a ceremony which then took half an hour; and, about four o'clock, we found ourselves on the summit of the White Moss, a hill which rises between the second and third mile-stones on the stage from Ambleside to Keswick, and which then retarded the traveller's advance by a full fifteen minutes, but is now evaded by a lower line of road. In ascending this hill, from weariness of moving so slowly, I, with the two Coleridges, had alighted; and, as we all chose to stretch our legs by running down the hill, we had left the chaise behind us, and had even lost the sound of the wheels at times, when, all at once, we came at an abrupt turn of the road, in sight of a white cottage, with two solemn yew-trees breaking the glare of its white walls. A sudden shock seized me on recognising this cottage, of which in the previous year, I had gained a momentary glimpse from Hammerscar, on the opposite side of the lake. I paused, and felt my old panic returning upon me; but just then, as if to take away all doubt upon the subject, I saw Hartley Coleridge, who had gained upon me considerably during my pause of hesitation, suddenly turn in at á garden gate; and, just then, the chaise, which had been rattling furiously down the descent, according to the invariable practice of Westmoreland drivers, (for in Westmoreland they never lock down the steepest descents, and therefore rightly keep up their horses at a flying gallop,) suddenly turned a corner of the road and came into sight: at the same moment Mrs. Coleridge waved her hand from one of the front windows; and the direction of this motion to the right, at once confirmed me in my

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belief that here at last we had reached our port; that this little cottage was tenanted by that man whom, of all the men from the beginning of time, I most fervently desired to see; that, in less than a minute, I should meet Wordsworth face to face. Coleridge was of opinion that, if a man were really and *consciously* to see an apparition — supposing, I mean, the case to be a physical possibility that a spiritual essence should be liable to the action of material organs — in such circumstances death would be the inevitable result; and, if so, the wish which we hear so commonly expressed for such experience is as thoughtless as that of Semele in the Grecian Mythology, so natural in a female, that her lover should visit her *en grand costume*, and 'with his tail on' — presumptuous ambition, that unexpectedly wrought its own ruinous chastisement! Judged by Coleridge's test, my situation could not have been so terrific as *his* who anticipates a ghost — for, certainly, I survived this meeting; but, at that instant, it seemed pretty much the same to my own feelings.

Never before or since can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself; now, however, I *did* tremble; and I forgot, what in no other circumstances I could have forgotten, to stop for the coming up of the chaise, that I might be ready to hand Mrs. Coleridge out. Had Charlemagne and all his Peerage been behind me, or Cæsar and his equipage, or Death on his pale horse, I should have forgotten them at that moment of intense expectation, and of eyes fascinated to what lay before me, or what might in a moment appear. Through the little gate I pressed forward; ten steps beyond it lay the principal door of the house. To this, no longer clearly

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conscious of my own feelings, I passed on rapidly; I heard a step, a voice, and, like a flash of lightning, I saw the figure emerge of a tallish man, who held out his hand, and saluted me with the most cordial manner, and the warmest expression of friendly welcome that it is possible to imagine. The chaise, however, drawing up to the gate at that moment, he (and there needed no Roman nomenclator to tell me that this *he*, the owner of this noble countenance, was Wordsworth) felt himself summoned, as master of the hospitalities on the occasion, to advance and receive Mrs. Coleridge. I, therefore, stunned almost with the actual accomplishment of a catastrophe so long anticipated and so long postponed, mechanically went forward into the house. A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad; very prettily wainscotted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was — a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered, at almost every season of the year, with roses; and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jessamine and other fragrant shrubs. From the exuberant luxuriance of the vegetation around it, and from the dark hue of the wainscotting, this window, though tolerably large, did not furnish a very powerful light to one who entered from the open air. However, I saw sufficiently to be aware of two ladies just entering the room, from a doorway opening upon a little staircase. The foremost, a tall young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her features that I had ever beheld, made a slight curtsey, and advanced to me, presenting her hand with so frank an air that all embarrass-

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ment must have fled in a moment, before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth, cousin of the poet; and, for the last five years or more, his wife. She was now mother of two children, a son and a daughter; and she furnished a remarkable proof how possible it is for a woman neither handsome nor even comely, according to the rigor of criticism — nay, generally pronounced very plain — to exercise all the practical power and fascination of beauty, through the mere compensatory charms of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect, and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements. *Words*, I was going to have added; but her words were few. In reality, she talked so little that Mr. Slave-Trade Clarkson used to say of her that she could only say '*God bless you!*' Certainly her intellect was not of an active order; but, in a quiescent, reposing, meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts; and it would have been strange indeed if she, who enjoyed such eminent advantages of training, from the daily society of her husband and his sister, not only hearing the best parts of English literature daily read, or quoted by short fragments, but also hearing them very often critically discussed in a style of great originality and truth, and by the light of strong poetic feeling — strange it would have been had any person, though dull as the weeds of Lethe in the native constitution of his mind, failed to acquire some power of judging for himself, and putting forth some functions of activity. But undoubtedly that was not her element: to feel and to enjoy in a luxurious repose of mind — there was her *forte* and her peculiar privilege; and how much better this was adapted to her husband's taste, how much more adapted to uphold the comfort of his daily life, than a blue-stocking

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loquacity, or even a legitimate talent for discussion and analytic skill, may be inferred from his celebrated verses, beginning —

> 'She was a phantom of delight
> When first she gleam'd upon my sight;'

and ending with this matchless winding up of an intellectual homage, involving a description of an almost ideal wife —

> 'A perfect woman, nobly plann'd
> To warn, to comfort, to command;
> And yet' —

going back to a previous thought, and resuming a leading impression of the whole character —

> 'And yet a spirit too, and bright
> With something of an angel light.'

From these verses, I say, it may be inferred what were the qualities which won Wordsworth's admiration in a wife; for these verses were written upon Mary Hutchinson, his own cousin, and his wife; and not written, as Coleridge's movable verses upon '*Sara*,' for some forgotten original Sara, and subsequently transferred to every other Sara who came across his path. Once for all, these exquisite lines were dedicated to Mrs. Wordsworth; were understood to describe her — to have been prompted by the feminine graces of her character; hers they are, and will remain for ever. To these, therefore, I may refer the reader for an idea, by infinite degrees more powerful and vivid than I could give him, of what was most important in the partner and second self of the poet. And I shall add to this abstract of her *moral* portrait these few concluding traits of her appearance in a physical sense. She was tall — that I have already said; her figure was

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good — except that, for my taste, it was rather too slender, and so it always continued. In complexion she was fair; and there was something peculiarly pleasing even in this accident of the skin, for it was accompanied by an animated expression of health, a blessing which, in fact, she possessed uninterruptedly, very pleasing in itself, and also a powerful auxiliary of that smiling benignity which constituted the greatest attraction of her person. 'Her eyes' — the reader may already know — 'her eyes' —

> 'Like stars of twilight fair;
> Like twilight, too, her dark brown hair;
> But all things else about her drawn
> From May-time and the cheerful dawn.'

But strange it is to tell that, in these eyes of vesper gentleness, there was a considerable obliquity of vision; and much beyond that slight obliquity which is often supposed to be an attractive foible of the countenance: and yet, though it *ought* to have been displeasing or repulsive, in fact it was not. Indeed all faults, had they been ten times more and greater, would have been swallowed up or neutralized by that supreme expression of her features, to the intense unity of which every lineament in the fixed parts, and every undulation in the moving parts, or play of her countenance, concurred — viz., a sunny benignity — a radiant gracefulness — such as in this world I never saw equalled or approached.

Here, then, the reader has a sketch of Mrs. Wordsworth. Immediately behind her, moved a lady, much shorter, much slighter, and perhaps, in all other respects, as different from her in personal characteristics as could have been wished, for the most effective contrast. 'Her face was of Egyptian brown;' rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan.

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Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, (for she had rejected all offers of marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children,) gave to her whole demeanor and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict, that was sometimes distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often, or rather generally, suffered in point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility, and, perhaps, from some morbid irritability of the nerves. At times, the self-counteraction and self-baffling of her feelings caused her even to stammer, and so determinately to stammer, that a stranger who should have seen her and quitted her in that state of feeling, would have certainly set her down for one plagued with that infirmity of speech, as distressingly as Charles Lamb himself. This was Miss Wordsworth, the only sister of the poet — his 'Dorothy;' who naturally owed so much to the life-long intercourse with her great brother, in his most solitary and sequestered years; but, on the other hand, to whom he has acknowledged obligations of the profoundest nature; and, in particular, this mighty one, through which we also, the admirers and the worshippers through every age of this great poet, are become equally her debtors — that whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendencies, too stern — too austere — too much

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enamored of an ascetic harsh sublimity, she it was — the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain tracks, in Highland glens, and in the dim recesses of German charcoal-burners — that first *couched* his eye to the sense of beauty — humanized him by the gentler charities, and engrafted, with her delicate female touch, those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature, which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiness of its trunks. The greatest deductions from Miss Wordsworth's attractions, and from the exceeding interest which surrounded her in right of her character, her history, and the relation which she fulfilled towards her brother, was the glancing quickness of her motions, and other circumstances in her deportment, (such as her stooping attitude when walking,) which gave an ungraceful, and even an unsexual character to her appearance when out of doors. She did not cultivate the graces which preside over the person and its carriage. But, on the other hand, she was a person of very remarkable endowments intellectually; and, in addition to the other great services which she rendered to her brother, this I may mention, as greater than all the rest, and it was one which equally operated to the benefit of every casual companion in a walk — viz., the exceeding sympathy, always ready and always profound, by which she made all that one could tell her, all that one could describe, all that one could quote from a foreign author, reverberate as it were, *à plusieurs reprises*, to one's own feelings, by the manifest impression it made upon her. The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular, and not systemati-

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cally built up. She was content to be ignorant of many things; but what she knew and had really mastered, lay where it could not be disturbed — in the temple of her own most fervid heart. In whatever I say or shall say of Miss Wordsworth, the reader may understand me to have the entire sanction and concurrence of Professor Wilson. We both knew Miss Wordsworth well; and we heartily agreed in admiring her.

Such were the two ladies, who, with himself and two children, and at that time one servant, composed the poet's household. They were both somewhere about twenty-eight years old; and, if the reader inquires about the single point which I have left untouched in their portraiture — viz., the style of their manners — I may say that it was in *some* points, naturally of a plain household simplicity, but everyway pleasing, unaffected, and (as respects Mrs. Wordsworth) even dignified. Few persons had seen so little as this lady of the world. She had seen nothing of high life, for she had seen none at all. Consequently, she was unacquainted with the conventional modes of behavior, prescribed in particular situations by high breeding. But, as these modes are little more than the product of dispassionate good sense, applied to the circumstances of the case, it is surprising how few deficiencies are perceptible, even to the most vigilant eye — or, at least, essential deficiencies — in the general demeanor of any unaffected young woman, acting habitually under a sense of sexual dignity, courtesy, pure tastes, and elegant enjoyments, assisted by the daily counsel and revision of a masculine intellect, in the person of a brother or a husband. Miss Wordsworth had seen most of life, and even of good company; for she had lived, when quite a girl, under the protection of a near relation at Windsor, who was a personal favorite of the royal

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family, and especially of George III. Consequently she ought to have been the more polished of the two; and yet, from greater natural aptitudes for refinement of manner in her sister-in-law, and partly, perhaps, from her more quiet and subdued manner, Mrs. Wordsworth would have been pronounced the more ladylike person.

From the interest which attaches to every person so nearly connected as these two ladies with a great poet, I have allowed myself a larger latitude than else might have been justifiable in describing them. I now go on with my narrative: —

I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little dining-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fire-place of this as his

'Half-kitchen and half-parlor fire.'

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and, in other respects, pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps three hundred volumes, which seemed to consecrate the room as the poet's study and composing room; and so occasionally it was. But far oftener he both studied, as I found, and composed on the high road. I had not been two minutes at the fire-side, when in came Wordsworth, returning from his friendly attentions to the travellers below, who, it seemed, had been over-persuaded by hospitable solicitations to stay for this night in Grasmere, and to make out the remaining thirteen miles of their road to Keswick on the following day. Wordsworth entered. And '*what-like*' — to use a Westmoreland, as well as a Scottish expression — '*what-like*' was Wordsworth? A reviewer in *Tait's Maga-*

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zine,* in noticing some recent collection of literary portraits, gives it as his opinion that Charles Lamb's head was the finest amongst them. This remark may have been justified by the engraved portraits; but, certainly, the critic would have cancelled it had he seen the original heads — at least, had he seen them in youth or in maturity; for Charles Lamb bore age with less disadvantage to the intellectual expression of his appearance than Wordsworth, in whom a sanguine, or rather coarse complexion, (or rather not complexion, properly speaking, so much as texture of flesh,) has, of late years, usurped upon the original bronze-tint and finer skin; and this change of hue and change in the quality of skin, has been made fourfold more conspicuous, and more unfavorable in its general effect, by the harsh contrast of grizzled hair which has displaced the original brown. No change in personal appearance ever can have been so unfortunate; for, generally speaking, whatever other disadvantages old age may bring along with it, one effect, at least, in male subjects, has a compensating tendency — that it removes any tone of vigor too harsh, and mitigates the expression of power too unsubdued. But, in Wordsworth, the effect of the change has been to substitute an air of animal vigor, or, at least, hardiness, as if derived from constant exposure to the wind and weather, for the fine, sombre complexion which he once had, resembling that of a Venetian senator or a Spanish monk.

Here, however, in describing the personal appearance of Wordsworth, I go back, of course, to the point of time at which I am speaking. To begin with his figure: — Wordsworth was, upon the whole, not a well-made man. His legs were pointedly condemned by all the female

* Vol. IV., page 793, (Dec. 1837.)

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connoisseurs in legs that ever I heard lecture upon that topic; not that they were bad in any way which *would* force itself upon your notice — there was no absolute deformity about them; and undoubtedly they had been serviceable legs beyond the average standard of human requisition; for I calculate, upon good data, that with these identical legs Wordsworth must have traversed a distance of 175 to 180,000 English miles — a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of wine, spirits, and all other stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits; to which he has been indebted for a life of unclouded happiness, and we for much of what is most excellent in his writings. But, useful as they have proved themselves, the Wordsworthian legs were certainly not ornamental; and it was really a pity, as I agreed with a lady in thinking, that he had not another pair for evening dress parties — when no boots lend their friendly aid to masque our imperfections from the eyes of female rigorists — the *elegantes formarum spectatrices*. A sculptor would certainly have disapproved of their contour. But the worst part of Wordsworth's person was the bust: there was a narrowness and a droop about the shoulders which became striking, and had an effect of meanness when brought into close juxtaposition with a figure of a most statuesque order. Once on a summer morning, walking in the vale of Langdale with Wordsworth, his sister, and Mr. J——, a native Westmoreland clergyman, I remember that Miss Wordsworth was positively mortified by the peculiar illustration which settled upon this defective conformation. Mr. J——, a fine towering figure, six feet high, massy and columnar in his proportions, happened to be walking, a little in advance, with Wordsworth; Miss Wordsworth and myself being in the rear; and from the nature of the conversation which then prevailed in our front rank,

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something or other about money, devises, buying and selling, we of the rear-guard thought it requisite to preserve this arrangement for a space of three miles or more; during which time, at intervals, Miss W—— would exclaim, in a tone of vexation, 'Is it possible? — can that be William? How very mean he looks!' and could not conceal a mortification that seemed really painful, until I, for my part, could not forbear laughing outright at the serious interest which she carried into this trifle. She was, however, right as regarded the mere visual judgment. Wordsworth's figure, with all its defects, was brought into powerful relief by one which had been cast in a more square and massy mould; and in such a case it impressed a spectator with a sense of absolute meanness, more especially when viewed from behind, and not counteracted by his countenance; and yet Wordsworth was of a good height, just five feet ten, and not a slender man; on the contrary, by the side of Southey his limbs looked thick, almost in a disproportionate degree. But the total effect of Wordsworth's person was always worst in a state of motion; for, according to the remark I have heard from many country people, 'he walked like a cade' — a cade being some sort of insect which advances by an oblique motion. This was not always perceptible, and in part depended (I believe) upon the position of his arms; when either of these happened (as was very customary) to be inserted into the unbuttoned waistcoat, his walk had a wry or twisted appearance; and not appearance only — for I have known it, by slow degrees, gradually to edge off his companion from the middle to the side of the high-road.* Meantime, his face — that was one which would

* In our Westmoreland highroads, which are so fortunate as to have little breadth beyond that of lanes, there is no side-path, not even on

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have made amends for greater defects of figure; it was certainly the noblest for intellectual effects that, in actual life, I have seen, or at least have consciously been led to notice. Many such, or even finer, I have seen amongst the portraits of Titian, and, in a later period, amongst those of Vandyke, from the great era of Charles I., as also from the court of Elizabeth and of Charles II.; but none which has so much impressed me in my own time.

Haydon, the eminent painter, in his great picture of *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, has introduced Wordsworth in the character of a disciple attending his Divine Master. This fact is well known, and as the picture itself is tolerably well known to the public eye, there are multitudes now living who will have seen a very impressive likeness of Wordsworth — some consciously, some not suspecting it. There will, however, always be many who have *not* seen any portrait at all of Wordsworth; and therefore I will describe its general outline and effect. It was a face of the long order, often falsely classed as oval; but a greater mistake is made by many people in supposing the long face, which prevailed so remarkably in the Elizabethan and Carolinian periods, to have become extinct in our days. Miss Ferrier, in one of her brilliant novels, ('Marriage,' I think,) makes a Highland girl protest that 'no Englishman *with his round face*' shall ever wean her heart from her own country; but England is not the land of round faces — and those have observed little indeed who think so: France it is that grows the round face, and in so large a majority of her provinces that it has become one of the national characteristics. And the remarkable impression which an

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approaching towns; consequently everybody walks at large upon the carriage track.

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Englishman receives from the prevalence of the eternal orb of the human countenance, proves of itself, without any *conscious* testimony, how the fact stands; in the blind sense of a monotony, in this respect not usual elsewhere, lies involved an argument that cannot be gainsaid. Besides receiving this evidence from positive experience, even upon an *à priori* argument, how is it possible that the long face so prevalent in England, by all confession, in certain splendid eras of our history, should have had time, in some five or six generations, to grow extinct? Again, the character of face varies essentially in different provinces. Wales has no connection in this respect with Devonshire, nor Kent with Yorkshire, nor either with Westmoreland. England, it is true, tends beyond all known examples to a general amalgamation of differences by means of its unrivalled freedom of intercourse. Yet even in England, law and necessity have opposed as yet such and so many obstacles to the free diffusion of labor, that every generation occupies by at least five sixths of its numbers the ground of its ancestors.

The movable part of a population is chiefly the higher part; and it is the lower classes that, in every nation, compose the *fundus*, in which lies latent the national face as well as the national character. Each exists here in racy purity and integrity, not disturbed in the one by alien intermarriages, nor in the other by novelties of opinion or other casual effects derived from education and reading. Now, look into this *fundus*, and you will find, in many districts, no such prevalence of the round orbicular face as some people erroneously suppose: and in Westmoreland especially, the ancient long face of the Elizabethan period, powerfully resembling in all its lineaments the ancient Roman face, and often (though not so uniformly) the face of northern Italy in modern times.

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The face of Sir Walter Scott, as Irving, the pulpit orator, once remarked to me, was the indigenous face of the Border: the mouth, which was bad, and the entire lower part of the face, are seen repeated in thousands of working men's; or, as Irving chose to illustrate his position, 'in thousands of Border horse-jockeys.' In like manner, Wordsworth's face was, if not absolutely the indigenous face of the Lake district, at any rate a variety of that face, a modification of that original type. The head was well filled out; and there, to begin with, was a great advantage over the head of Charles Lamb, which was absolutely truncated in the posterior region — sawn off, as it were, by no timid sawyer. The forehead was not remarkably lofty — and, by the way, some artists, in their ardor for realizing their phrenological preconceptions, not suffering nature to surrender quietly and by slow degrees, her own alphabet of signs, and characters, and hieroglyphical expressions, but forcing her language prematurely into a conformity with their own crude speculations, have given to Sir Walter Scott a pile of forehead which is unpleasing and cataphysical, in fact a caricature of anything that is ever seen in nature, and would (if real) be esteemed a deformity; in one instance, that which was introduced in some annual or other, the forehead makes about two thirds of the entire face. Wordsworth's forehead is also liable to caricature misrepresentations, in these days of phrenology: but, whatever it may appear to be in any man's fanciful portrait, the real living forehead, as I have been in the habit of seeing it for more than five-and-twenty years, is not remarkable for its height; but it *is* perhaps remarkable for its breadth and expansive development. Neither are the eyes of Wordsworth 'large,' as is erroneously stated somewhere in 'Peter's Letters;' on the contrary, they are (I think)

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rather small; but *that* does not interfere with their effect, which at times is fine and suitable to his intellectual character. At times, I say, for the depth and subtlety of eyes varies exceedingly with the state of the stomach; and, if young ladies were aware of the magical transformations which can be wrought in the depth and sweetness of the eye by a few weeks' walking exercise, I fancy we should see their habits in this point altered greatly for the better. I have seen Wordsworth's eyes oftentimes affected powerfully in this respect; his eyes are not, under any circumstances, bright, lustrous, or piercing; but, after a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear. The light which resides in them is at no time a superficial light; but, under favorable accidents, it is a light which seems to come from depths below all depths; in fact, it is more truly entitled to be held 'The light that never was on land or sea,' a light radiating from some far spiritual world, than any the most idealizing light that ever yet a painter's hand created. The nose, a little arched, and large, which, by the way, (according to a natural phrenology, existing centuries ago amongst some of the lowest amongst the human species,) has always been accounted an unequivocal expression of animal appetites organically strong. And that was in fact the basis of Wordsworth's intellectual power: his intellectual passions were fervent and strong; because they rested upon a basis of animal sensibility superior to that of most men, diffused through *all* the animal passions (or appetites); and something of that will be found to hold of all poets who have been great by original force and power, not (as Virgil) by means of fine management and exquisite artifice of composition applied to their conceptions. The

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mouth, and the region of the mouth, the whole circumjacencies of the mouth, were about the strongest feature in Wordsworth's face; there was nothing specially to be noticed that I know of, in the mere outline of the lips; but the swell and protrusion of the parts above and around the mouth, are both noticeable in themselves, and also because they remind me of a very interesting fact which I discovered about three years after this my first visit to Wordsworth.

Being a great collector of everything relating to Milton, I had naturally possessed myself, whilst yet very young, of Richardson the painter's thick octavo volume of notes on the 'Paradise Lost.' It happened, however, that my copy, in consequence of that mania for portrait collecting which has stripped so many English classics of their engraved portraits, had no picture of Milton. Subsequently I ascertained that it ought to have had a very good likeness of the great poet; and I never rested until I procured a copy of the book, which had not suffered in this respect by the fatal admiration of the amateur. The particular copy offered to me was one which had been priced unusually high, on account of the unusually fine specimen which it contained of the engraved portrait. This, for a particular reason, I was exceedingly anxious to see; and the reason was — that, according to an anecdote reported by Richardson himself, this portrait, of all that was shown to her, was the only one acknowledged, by Milton's last surviving daughter, to be a strong likeness of her father. And her involuntary gestures concurred with her deliberate words: — for, on seeing all the rest, she was silent and inanimate; but the very instant she beheld this from a crayon drawing which embellishes the work of Richardson, she burst out into a rapture of passionate recognition; exclaiming — 'This is my father!

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this is my dear father!' Naturally, therefore, after such a testimony, so much stronger than any other person in the world could offer to the authentic value of this portrait, I was eager to see it.

Judge of my astonishment, when, in this portrait of Milton, I saw a likeness nearly perfect of Wordsworth, better by much than any which I have since seen, of those expressly painted for himself. The likeness is tolerably preserved in that by Carruthers, in which one of the little Rydal waterfalls, &c., composes a background; yet this is much inferior, as a mere portrait of Wordsworth, to the Richardson head of Milton; and this, I believe, is the last which represents Wordsworth in the vigor of his power. The rest, which I have not seen, may be better as works of art, (for anything I know to the contrary,) but they must labor under the great disadvantage of presenting the features when 'defeatured' in the degree and the way I have described, by the idiosyncrasies of old age, as it affects this family; for it is noticed of the Wordsworths, by those who are familiar with their peculiarities, that, in their very blood and constitutional differences, lie hidden causes, able, in some mysterious way —

> 'Those shocks of passion to prepare
> That kill the bloom before its time,
> And blanch, without the owner's crime,
> The most resplendent hair.'

Some people, it is notorious, live faster than others; the oil is burned out sooner in one constitution than another —and the cause of this may be various; but, in the Wordsworths' one part of the cause is, no doubt, the secret fire of a temperament too fervid; the self-consuming energies of the brain, that gnaw at the heart and life-strings for ever. In that account which 'The Excur-

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sion,' presents to us of an imaginary Scotsman, who, to still the tumult of his heart, when visiting the 'forces' (*i. e.* cataracts) of a mountainous region, obliges himself to study the laws of light and color, as they affect the rainbow of the stormy waters; vainly attempting to mitigate the fever which consumed him, by entangling his mind in profound speculations; raising a cross-fire of artillery from the subtilizing intellect, under the vain conceit that, in this way, he could silence the mighty battery of his impassioned brain — there we read a picture of Wordsworth and his own youth. In Miss Wordsworth, every thoughtful observer might read the same self-consuming style of thought. And the effect upon each was so powerful for the promotion of a premature old age, and of a premature expression of old age, that strangers invariably supposed them fifteen to twenty years older than they were. And I remember Wordsworth once laughingly reporting to me, on returning from a short journey in 1809, a little personal anecdote, which sufficiently showed what was the spontaneous impression upon that subject of casual strangers, whose feelings were not confused by previous knowledge of the truth. He was travelling by a stage-coach, and seated outside, amongst a good half dozen of fellow-passengers. One of these, an elderly man, who confessed to having passed the grand climacterical year (9 multiplied into 7) of 63, though he did not say precisely by how many years, said to Wordsworth, upon some anticipations which they had been mutually discussing of changes likely to result from enclosures, &c., then going on or projecting — 'Ay, ay, another dozen of years will show us strange sights; but you and I can hardly expect to see them.' 'How so?' said W. 'Why, my friend, how old do you take me to be?' 'Oh, I beg pardon,' said the other; 'I meant no

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offence — but what?' looking at W. more attentively — 'you'll never see threescore, I'm of opinion.' And, to show that he was not singular in so thinking, he appealed to all the other passengers; and the motion passed, *nem. con.* that Wordsworth was rather over than under sixty. Upon this he told them the literal truth — that he had not yet accomplished his thirty-ninth year. 'God bless me!' said the climacterical man; 'so then, after all, you'll have a chance to see your childer get up like, and get settled! God bless me, to think of that!' And so closed the conversation, leaving to W. a pointed expression, of his own premature age, as revealing itself by looks, in this unaffected astonishment, amongst a whole party of plain men, that he should really belong to a generation of the forward-looking, who live by hope; and might reasonably expect to see a child of seven years old matured into a man.

Returning to the question of portraits, I would observe, that this Richardson engraving of Milton has the advantage of presenting, not only by far the best likeness of Wordsworth, but of Wordsworth in the prime of his powers — a point so essential in the case of one so liable to premature decay. It may be supposed that I took an early opportunity of carrying the book down to Grasmere, and calling for the opinions of Wordsworth's family upon this most remarkable coincidence. Not one member of that family but was as much impressed as myself with the accuracy of the likeness. All the peculiarities even were retained — a drooping appearance of the eyelids, that remarkable swell which I have noticed about the mouth, the way in which the hair lay upon the forehead. In two points only there was a deviation from the rigorous truth of Wordsworth's features — the face was a little too short and too broad, and the eyes were too large. There was also a

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wreath of laurel about the head, which (as Wordsworth remarked) disturbed the natural expression of the whole picture; else, and with these few allowances, he also admitted that the resemblance was, *for that period of his life*, (but let not that restriction be forgotten,) perfect, or as nearly so as art could accomplish.

I have gone into so large and circumstantial a review of my recollections in a matter that would have been trifling and tedious in excess, had their recollection related to a less important man; but, with a certain knowledge that the least of them will possess a lasting and a growing interest in connection with William Wordsworth — a man who is not simply destined to be had in everlasting remembrance by every generation of men, but (which is a modification of the kind worth any multiplication of the degree) to be had in that *sort* of remembrance which has for its shrine the heart of man — that world of fear and grief, of love and trembling hope, which constitutes the essential man; in *that* sort of remembrance, and not in such a remembrance as we grant to the ideas of a great philosopher, a great mathematician, or a great reformer. How different, how peculiar, is the interest which attends the great poets who have made themselves necessary to the human heart; who have first brought into consciousness, and next have clothed in words, those grand catholic feelings that belong to the grand catholic situations of life, through all its stages; who have clothed them in such words that human wit despairs of bettering them! How remote is that burning interest which settles upon men's living memories in our daily thoughts, from that which follows, in a disjointed and limping way, the mere nominal memories of those who have given a direction and movement to the currents of human thought, and who, by some leading impulse, have even quickened into life speculations appoint-

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ed to terminate in positive revolutions of human power over physical agents! Mighty were the powers, solemn and serene is the memory, of Archimedes: and Apollonius shines like 'the starry Galileo,' in the firmament of human genius; yet how frosty is the feeling associated with these names by comparison with that which, upon every sunny brae, by the side of every ancient forest, even in the farthest depths of Canada, many a young innocent girl, perhaps at this very moment — looking now with fear to the dark recesses of the infinite forest, and now with love to the pages of the infinite poet, until the fear is absorbed and forgotten in the love — cherishes in her heart for the name and person of Shakspeare! The one is abstraction, and a shadow recurring only by distinct efforts of recollection, and even thus to none but the enlightened and the learned; the other is a household image, rising amongst household remembrances, never separated from the spirit of delight, and hallowed by a human love! Such a place in the affections of the young and the ingenuous, no less than of the old and philosophic, who happen to have any depth of feeling, will Wordsworth occupy in every clime and in every land; for the language in which he writes, thanks be to Providence, which has beneficently opened the widest channels for the purest and most elevating literature, is now ineradicably planted in all quarters of the earth; the echoes under every latitude of every longitude now reverberate English words; and all things seem tending to this result — that the English and the Spanish languages will finally share the earth between them. Wordsworth is peculiarly the poet for the solitary and the meditative; and, throughout the countless myriads of future America and future Australia, no less than Polynesia and Southern Africa, there will be situations without end, fitted by their loneliness to favor his influence for centuries to

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come, by the end of which period it may be anticipated that education (of a more enlightened quality and more systematic than yet prevails) may have wrought such changes on the human species, as will uphold the growth of all philosophy, and, therefore, of all poetry which has its foundations laid in the heart of man.

Commensurate with the interest in the poetry will be a secondary interest in the poet — in his personal appearance, and his habits of life, *so far as they can be supposed at all dependent upon his intellectual characteristics;* for, with respect to differences that are purely casual, and which illustrate no principle of higher origin that accidents of education or chance position, it is a gossiping taste only that could seek for such information, and a gossiping taste that would choose to consult it. Meantime, it is under no such gossiping taste that volumes have been written upon the mere portraits and upon the possible portraits of Shakspeare; and how invaluable should we all feel any record to be, which should raise the curtain upon Shakspeare's daily life — his habits, personal and social, his intellectual tastes, and his opinions on contemporary men, books, events, or national prospects! I cannot, therefore, think it necessary to apologize for the most circumstantial notices, past or to come, of Wordsworth's person and habits of life. But one thing it is highly necessary that I should explain, and the more so because a grand confession which I shall make at this point, as in some measure necessary to protect myself from the appearance of a needless mystery and reserve, would, if unaccompanied by such an explanation, expose me to the suspicion of having, at times, yielded to a private prejudice, so far as to color my account of Wordsworth with a spirit of pique or illiberality. I shall acknowledge then, on my own part — and I feel that I

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might even make the same acknowledgment on the part of Professor Wilson, (though I have no authority for doing so) — that to neither of us, though, at all periods of our lives, treating him with the deep respect which is his due, and, in our earlier years, with a more than filial devotion — nay, with a blind loyalty of homage, which had in it, at that time, something of the spirit of martyrdom, which, for his sake, courted even reproach and contumely; yet to neither of us has Wordsworth made those returns of friendship and kindness which most firmly I maintain that we were entitled to have challenged. More by far in sorrow than in anger — sorrow that points to recollections too deep and too personal for a transient notice — I acknowledge myself to have been long alienated from Wordsworth; sometimes even I feel a rising emotion of hostility — nay, something, I fear, too nearly akin to vindictive hatred. Strange revolution of the human heart! strange example of the changes in human feeling that may be wrought by time and chance! to find myself carried by the great tide of affairs, and by error, more or less, on one side or the other, either on Wordsworth's in doing too little, or on mine in expecting too much — carried so far away from that early position which, for so long a course of years, I held in respect to him — that now, for that fountain of love towards Mr. Wordsworth and all his household — fountain profound — fountain inexhaustible —

> 'Whose only business was to flow —
> And flow it did, not taking heed
> Of its own bounty or their need' —

now, I find myself standing aloof, gloomily granting (because I cannot refuse) my intellectual homage, but no longer rendering my tribute as a willing service of the

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heart, or rejoicing in the prosperity of my idol! Could I have believed, twenty-five years ago, had a voice from Heaven revealed it, that, even then, with a view to what time should bring about, I might adopt the spirit of the old verses, and, apostrophizing Wordsworth, might say — Great Poet! when that day, so fervently desired, shall come, that men shall undo their wrongs, and when every tongue shall chant thy praises, and every heart

> 'Devote a wreath to thee —
> That day (for come it will) that day
> Shall I lament to see.'

But no; not so. Lament I never did; nor suffered even 'the hectic of a moment' to sully or to trouble that purity of perfect pleasure with which I welcomed this great revolution in the public feeling. Let me render justice to Professor Wilson, as well as to myself: not for a moment, not by a solitary movement of reluctance or demur, did either of us hang back in giving that public acclamation which we, by so many years, had anticipated; yes, we singly — we with no sympathy to support us from any quarter. The public press remains, with its inexorable records, to vouch for us, that we paid an oriental homage, homage as to one who could have pleaded antique privilege, and the consecration of centuries, at a time when the finger of scorn was pointed at Mr. Wordsworth from every journal in the land; and that we persisted in this homage at a period long enough removed to have revolutionized the public mind, and also long enough to have undermined the personal relations between us of confidential friendship. Did it ask no courage to come forward, in the first character, as solitary friends, holding up our protesting hands amidst a wilderness of chattering buffoons? Did it ask no magnanimity

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to stand firmly to the post we had assumed, not passively acquiescing in the new state of public opinion, but exulting in it and aiding it, long after we had found reason to think ourselves injuriously treated? Times are changed; it needs no courage, in the year of our Lord 1839, to discover and proclaim a great poet in William Wordsworth; it needed none in the year 1815, to discover a frail power in the French empire, or an idol of clay and brass in the French Emperor. But, to make the first discovery in the years 1801, 1802, the other in 1808, those things were worthy of honor; and the first was worthy of gratitude from all the parties interested in the event. Let me not, however, be misunderstood — Mr. Wordsworth is a man of unimpeached, unimpeachable integrity: he neither has done, nor could have done, consciously, any act in violation of his conscience. On the contrary, I am satisfied, Professor Wilson is satisfied, that injuries of a kind to involve an admitted violation of principle, cannot have occurred in Mr. Wordsworth's intercourse with any man. But there are cases of wrong for which the conscience is not the competent tribunal. Sensibility to the just claims of another, power to appreciate these claims, power also to perceive the true mode of conveying and expressing the appreciation — in a case, suppose, where the claims to consideration are at once real, and even tangible, as to their ground, yet subtle and aerial as to the shape they have assumed — claims, for instance, founded on a personal devotion to the interests of the other party, when the rest of the world slighted them — this mode of appreciating skill may be utterly wanting, or may be crossed and thwarted by many a conflicting bias, where the conscience is quite incapable of going astray. I imagine a case such as this which follows: — The case of a man who, for many years, has

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connected himself closely with the domestic griefs and joys of another, over and above his primary service of giving to him the strength and the encouragement of a profound literary sympathy, at a time of universal scowling from the world; suppose this man to fall into a situation in which, from want of natural connections and from his state of insulation in life, it might be most important to his feelings that some support should be lent to him by a family having a known place and acceptation, and what may be called a root in the country, by means of connections, descent, and long settlement. To look for this, might be a most humble demand on the part of one who had testified his devotion in the way supposed. To miss it might —— but enough. I murmur not; complaint is weak at all times; and the hour is passed irrevocably, and by many a year, in which an act of friendship so natural, and costing so little, (in both senses so priceless,) could have been availing. The ear is deaf that should have been solaced by the sound of welcome. Call, but you will not be heard; shout aloud, but your 'ave!' and 'all hail!' will now tell only as an echo of departed days, proclaiming the hollowness of human hopes. I, for my part, have long learned the lesson of suffering in silence; and also I have learned to know that, wheresoever female prejudices are concerned, *there* it will be a trial more than Herculean, of a man's wisdom, if he can walk with an even step, and swerve neither to the right nor the left.

I shall now proceed to sketch the daily life and habits of those who are familiarly known to the public as the *Lake Poets;* but, first of all, as a proper introduction to this sketch, I shall trace, in a brief outline, the chief incidents in the life of William Wordsworth, which are inter-

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esting, not only in virtue of their illustrious subject, but also as exhibiting a most remarkable (almost a providential) arrangement of circumstances, all tending to one result — that of insulating from worldly cares, and carrying onward from childhood to the grave, in a state of serene happiness, one who was unfitted for daily toil, and, at all events, who could not, under such demands upon his time and anxieties, have prosecuted those genial labors in which all mankind have an interest.

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CHAPTER XI.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, a small town of Cumberland, seated on the river Cocker. His father was a lawyer, and acted as an agent for that Lord Lonsdale, the immediate predecessor of the present, who is not unfrequently described by those who still remember him as 'the bad Lord Lonsdale.' In what was he bad? Chiefly, I believe, in this — that, being a man of great local power, founded on his rank, on his official station of Lord Lieutenant over two counties, and on a very large estate, he used his power in a most oppressive way. I have heard it said that he was mad; and, at any rate, he was inordinately capricious — capricious even to eccentricity. But perhaps his madness was nothing more than the intemperance of a haughty and a headstrong will, encouraged by the consciousness of power, and tempted to abuses of it by the abject servility which poverty and dependence presented in one direction, embittering the contrast of that defiance which inevitably faced him in another throughout a land of freedom and amongst spirits as haughty as his own. He was a true feudal chieftain; and, in the very approaches to his mansion, in the style of his equipage, or whatever else was likely to meet the public eye, he delighted to express his disdain of modern refinements, and the haughty carelessness of his magnifi-

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cence. The coach in which he used to visit Penrith, the nearest town to his principal house of Lowther, was old and neglected: his horses fine, but untrimmed; and such was the impression diffused about him by his gloomy temper and his habits of oppression, that the streets were silent as he traversed them, and an awe sate upon many faces, (so, at least, I have heard a Penrith contemporary of the old despot declare,) pretty much like that which may be supposed to attend the entry into a guilty town, of some royal commission for trying state criminals. In his park, you saw some of the most magnificent timber in the kingdom — trees that were coeval with the feuds of York and Lancaster, yews that perhaps had furnished bows to Cœur de Lion, and oaks that might have built a navy. All was savage grandeur about these native forests: their sweeping lawns and glades had been unapproached, for centuries it might be, by the hand of art; and amongst them roamed — not the timid fallow deer — but thundering droves of wild horses.

Lord Lonsdale, according to an old English writer, (in describing, I think, the Earl of Arundel,) 'went sometimes to London, because there only he found a greater man than himself; but not often, because at home he was allowed to forget that there was such a man.' Even in London, however, his haughty injustice found occasions for making itself known. On a court day, (I revive an anecdote once familiarly known,) St. James's Street was lined by cavalry, and the orders were peremptory, that no carriages should be allowed to pass, except those which were carrying parties to court. Whether it were by accident or no, Lord Lonsdale's carriage advanced, and the coachman, in obedience to orders shouted out from the window, was turning down the forbidden route, when a trooper rode up to the horses' heads, and stopped them:

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the thundering menaces of Lord Lonsdale perplexed the soldier, who did not know but he might be bringing himself into a scrape by persisting in his opposition; but the officer on duty, observing the scene, rode up, and, in a determined tone, enforced the order, causing two of his men to turn the horses' heads round into Piccadilly. Lord Lonsdale threw his card to the officer — and a duel followed; in which, however, the outrageous injustice of his Lordship met with a pointed rebuke; for the first person whom he summoned to his aid, in the quality of second, though a friend, and (I believe) a relative of his own, declined to sanction, by any interference, so scandalous a quarrel with an officer for simply executing an official duty. In this dilemma — for probably he was aware that few military men would fail to take the same disapproving view of the affair — he applied to the present Earl of Lonsdale, then Sir William Lowther. Either there must have been some needless discourtesy in the officer's mode of fulfilling his duty, or else Sir William thought the necessity of the case, however wantonly provoked, a sufficient justification for a relative giving his assistance, even under circumstances of such egregious injustice. At any rate, it is due to Sir William, in mere candor, to suppose that he did nothing in this instance but what his conscience approved; seeing, that in all others his conduct has been such as to win him the universal respect of the two counties in which he is best known. He it was that acted as second; and, by a will which is said to have been dated the same day, he became eventually possessed of a large property, which did not necessarily accompany the title.

Another anecdote is told of the same Lord Lonsdale, which expresses, in a more eccentric way, and a way that to many people will be affecting — to some shocking — the moody energy of his passions. He loved, with

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passionate fervor, a fine young woman, of humble parentage, in a Cumberland farm-house. Her he had persuaded to leave her father and put herself under his protection. Whilst yet young and beautiful, she died: Lord Lonsdale's sorrow was profound; he could not bear the thought of a final parting from that face which had become so familiar to his heart: he caused her to be embalmed; a glass was placed over her features; and, at intervals, when his thoughts reverted to her memory, he found a consolation (or perhaps a luxurious irritation) of his sorrow, in visiting this sad memorial of his former happiness. This story, which I have often heard repeated by the country people of Cumberland, strengthened the general feeling of this eccentric nobleman's self-willed character, though in this instance complicated with a trait of character that argued nobler capacities. By what rules he guided himself in dealing with the various lawyers, agents, or stewards, whom his extensive estates brought into a dependency upon his justice or his moderation — whether in fact he had no rule, but left all to accident or caprice — I have never learned. Generally, I have heard it said, that in some years of his life he resisted the payment of all bills indiscriminately, which he had any colorable plea for supposing to contain overcharges; some fared ill because they were neighbors; and his Lordship could say, that 'he knew them to be knaves;' others fared worse, because they were so remote that 'how could his Lordship know what they were?' Of this number, and possibly for this reason left unpaid, was Wordsworth's father. He died whilst his four sons and one daughter were yet helpless children, leaving to them respectable fortunes; but which, as yet, were unrealized and tolerably hypothetic, as they happened to depend upon so shadowy a basis as the justice of Lord Lonsdale. The executors

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of the will, and trustees of the children's interests, in one point acted wisely: foreseeing the result of a legal contest with so potent a defendant as this leviathan of two counties, and that, under any nominal award, the whole estate of the orphans must be swallowed up in the costs of a suit that would be carried into Chancery, and finally before the Lords, they prudently withdrew from all active measures of opposition, confiding the event to Lord Lonsdale's returning sense of justice. Unfortunately for that nobleman's reputation, and also, as was thought, for the children's prosperity, before this somewhat rusty quality of justice could have time to operate, his Lordship died.

However, for once the world was wrong in its anticipations for the children: the successor to Lord Lonsdale's titles and Cumberland estates was made aware of the entire case, in all its circumstances; and he very honorably gave directions for full restitution being made. This was done; and in one respect the result was more fortunate for the children than if they had been trained from youth to rely upon their expectations: for by the time this repayment was made, three out of the five children were already settled in life, with the very amplest prospects opening before them — *so* ample as to make their private patrimonial fortunes of inconsiderable importance in their eyes: and very probably the withholding of their inheritance it was, however unjust, and however little contemplated as an occasion of any such effect, that urged these three persons to the exertions requisite for their present success. Two only of the children remained to whom the restoration of their patrimony was a matter of grave importance; but it was precisely those two whom no circumstances could have made independent of their hereditary means by personal exertions — viz., William Wordsworth, the poet, and Dorothy, the sole daughter of

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the house. The three others were — Richard, the eldest; he had become a thriving solicitor at one of the inns of court in London; and, if he died only moderately rich, and much below the expectations of his acquaintance, in the final result of his laborious life, it was because he was moderate in his desires; and, in his later years, reverting to the pastoral region of his infancy and boyhood, chose rather to sit down by a hearth of his own amongst the Cumberland mountains, and wisely to woo the deities of domestic pleasures and health, than to follow the chase after wealth in the feverish crowds of the capital. The third son (I believe) was Christopher, (Dr. Wordsworth,) who, at an early age, became a man of importance in the English church, being made one of the chaplains and librarians of the Archbishop of Canterbury, (Dr. Manners Sutton, father of the late Speaker.) He has since risen to the important and dignified station — once held by Barrow, and afterwards by Bentley — of Master of Trinity in Cambridge. Trinity in Oxford is not a first-rate college: but Trinity, Cambridge, answers in rank and authority to Christ Church in Oxford; and to be the head of that college is rightly considered on a level with a bishopric.

Dr. Wordsworth has distinguished himself as an author by several very useful republications, (especially the 'Ecclesiastical Biography,') which he has enriched with valuable notes. And in his own person, besides other works more exclusively learned, he is the author of one very interesting work of historical research upon the long agitated question of 'Who wrote the *Eicon Basilike?*' a question still unsettled, but much nearer to a settlement in consequence of the strong presumptions which Dr. Wordsworth has adduced on behalf of the King's claim. The fourth and youngest son, John, was in the service of the

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East India Company, and perished most unhappily on the voyage which he had meant to be his last, off the coast of Dorsetshire, in the Company's ship Abergavenny. A calumny was current at the time, that Captain Wordsworth was in a state of intoxication at the time of the calamity. But the printed report of the affair, revised by survivors, entirely disproves the calumny; which, besides, was in itself incredible to all who were acquainted with Captain Wordsworth's most temperate and even philosophic habits of life. So peculiarly indeed was Captain Wordsworth's temperament and demeanor, and the whole system of his life, colored by a grave and meditative turn of thought, that, amongst his brother officers in the Honorable Company's service, he bore the sirname of 'The Philosopher.' And William Wordsworth, the poet, not only spoke of him always with a sort of respect, that argued him to have been no ordinary man, but he has frequently assured me of one fact which, as implying some want of frankness and sincerity, gave me pain to hear — viz., that in the fine lines entitled, 'The Happy Warrior,' in which an analytical account is given of the main elements which enter into the composition of a real hero, he had in view chiefly his brother John's character. That was true, I dare say; but it was inconsistent, in some measure, with the note attached to the lines, by which the reader learns, that it was out of reverence for Lord Nelson, as one who transcended the estimate here made, that the poem had not been openly connected with his name, as the real suggester of the thoughts. Now, privately, though still professing a lively admiration for the mighty Admiral, as one of the few men who carried into his professional labors a real and vivid genius, (and thus far Wordsworth often testified a deep admiration for Lord N.) yet, in reference to these particular lines, he uniformly declared that Lord N.

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was much below the ideal there contemplated, and that, in fact, it had been suggested by the recollection of his brother. But, surely, in some of the first passages, this cannot be so; for example, when he makes it one trait of the heaven-born hero, that he, if called upon to face some mighty day of battle —

> 'To which heaven has join'd
> Great issues, good or bad, for human kind —
> Is happy as a lover, and attired
> With a supernal brightness, like a man inspir'd' —

surely he must have had Lord Nelson's idea predominating in his thoughts; for Captain Wordsworth was scarcely tried in such a situation. There can be no doubt, however, that he merited the praises of his brother; and it was indeed an improbable tale, that he should first of all deviate from this philosophic temperance upon an occasion when all his energies, and the fullest self-possession, were all likely to prove little enough. In reality it was the pilot, the incompetent pilot, who caused the fatal catastrophe: — 'O pilot, you have ruined me!' were amongst the last words that Captain Wordsworth was heard to utter — pathetic words, and fit for him, 'a meek man and a brave,' to use in addressing a last reproach, and summing up the infinite injury, to one who, not through misfortune or overruling will of Providence, but through miserable conceit and unprincipled levity, had brought total ruin upon so many a gallant countryman. Captain Wordsworth might have saved his own life; but the perfect loyalty of his nature to the claims upon him, that sublime fidelity to duty which is so often found amongst men of his profession, kept him to the last upon the wreck; and, after *that*, it is probable that the almost total wreck of his own fortunes, (which, but for this overthrow, would have amounted to twenty thousand pounds, upon the suc-

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cessful termination of this one voyage,) but still more, the total ruin of the new and splendid Indiaman confided to his care, had so much dejected his spirits, that he was not in a condition for making the efforts that, under a more hopeful prospect, he might have been able to make. Six weeks his body lay unrecovered; at the end of that time, it was found, and carried to the Isle of Wight, and buried in close neighborhood to the quiet fields which he had so recently described, in letters to his family at Grasmere, as a Paradise of English peace, to which his mind would be likely oftentimes to revert, amidst the agitations of the sea.

Such were the modes of life pursued by three of the orphan children — such the termination of life to two. Meantime, the daughter of the house was reared liberally, in the family of a relation at Windsor; and she might have pursued a quiet and decorous career, of a character, perhaps, somewhat tame, under the same dignified auspices; but at an early period of life her good angel threw open to her a life of nobler prospects, in the opportunity which then arose, and which she did not hesitate to seize, of becoming the companion, through a life of delightful wanderings — of what, to her more elevated friends, seemed nothing short of vagrancy — the companion and the confidential friend, and, with a view to the enlargement of her own intellect, the pupil, of a brother, the most original and most meditative man of his own age. William had passed his infancy on the very margin of the Lake district, just six miles, in fact, beyond the rocky screen of Whinlatter, and within one hour's ride of Bassinthwaite Water. To those who live in the tame scenery of Cockermouth, the blue mountains in the distance, the sublime peaks of Borrowdale and of Buttermere, raise aloft a signal, as it were, of a new country, a

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country of romance and mystery, to which the thoughts are habitually turning. Children are fascinated and haunted with vague temptations, when standing on the frontiers of such a foreign land; and so was Wordsworth fascinated, so haunted. Fortunate for Wordsworth that, at an early age, he was transferred to the very centre of this lovely district. At the little town of Hawkshead, seated on the north-west angle of Esthwaite Water, a grammar school (which, in English usage, means a school for classical literature) was founded, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, by Archbishop Sandys, a member of a very ancient family of that name, still seated in the neighborhood. Hither were sent all the four brothers; and here it was that Wordsworth passed his life until the time arrived for his removal to college. Taking into consideration the peculiar tastes of the person, and the peculiar advantages of the place, I conceive that no pupil of a public school can ever have passed a more luxurious boyhood than Wordsworth. The school discipline was not, I believe, very strict; the mode of living out of school very much resembled that of Eton for Oppidans; less elegant perhaps, and less costly in its provisions for accommodation, but not less comfortable; and in that part of the arrangements which was chiefly Etonian, even more so; for in both places the boys, instead of being gathered into one fold, and at night into one or two huge dormitories, were distributed amongst motherly old 'dames,' technically so called at Eton, but not at Hawkshead. In the latter place, agreeably to the inferior scale of the whole establishment, the houses were smaller, and more cottage-like, consequently more like private households; and the old lady of the *ménage* was more constantly amongst them, providing, with maternal tenderness and with a professional pride, for the comfort of her young flock, and protecting the weak

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from oppression. The humble cares to which these poor matrons dedicated themselves, may be collected from several allusions scattered through the poems of Wordsworth; that entitled 'Nutting,' for instance, in which his own early Spinosistic feeling is introduced, of a mysterious presence diffused through the solitudes of woods, a presence that was disturbed by the intrusion of careless and noisy outrage, and which is brought into a strong relief by the previous homely picture of the old housewife equipping her young charge with beggars' weeds in order to prepare him for a struggle with thorns and brambles. Indeed, not only the moderate rank of the boys, and the peculiar kind of relation assumed by these matrons, equally suggested this humble class of motherly attentions, but the whole spirit of the place and neighborhood was favorable to an old English homeliness of domestic and personal economy. Hawkshead, most fortunately for its own manners and the primitive style of its habits even to this day, stands about six miles out of the fashionable line for the 'Lakers.'

Esthwaite, though a lovely scene in its summer garniture of woods, has no features of permanent grandeur to rely upon. A wet or gloomy day, even in summer, reduces it to little more than a wildish pond, surrounded by miniature hills: and the sole circumstances which restore the sense of a romantic region and an alpine character, are the knowledge (but not the sense) of endless sylvan avenues, stretching for twenty miles to the seaside, and the towering groups of Langdale and Grasmere fells, which look over the little pastoral barriers of Esthwaite from distances of eight, ten, and fourteen miles. Esthwaite, therefore, being no object for itself, and the sublime head of Coniston being accessible by a road which evades Hawkshead, few tourists ever trouble

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the repose of this little village town. And in the days of which I am speaking, (1778–1787,) tourists were as yet few and infrequent to any parts of the country. Mrs. Radcliffe had not begun to cultivate the sense of the picturesque in her popular romances; guide-books, with the sole exception of 'Gray's Posthumous Letters,' had not arisen to direct public attention to this domestic Calabria; roads were rude, and, in many instances, not wide enough to admit post-chaises; but, above all, the whole system of travelling accommodations was barbarous and antediluvian for the requisitions of the pampered south. As yet the land had rest; the annual fever did not shake the very hills; and (which was the happiest immunity of the whole) false taste, the pseudo-romantic rage, had not violated the most awful solitudes amongst the ancient hills by opera-house decorations. Wordsworth, therefore, enjoyed this labyrinth of valleys in a perfection that no one can have experienced since the opening of the present century. The whole was one paradise of virgin beauty; and even the rare works of man, all over the land, were hoar with the gray tints of an antique picturesque; nothing was new, nothing was raw and uncicatrized. Hawkshead, in particular, though tamely seated in itself and its immediate purlieus, has a most fortunate and central locality, as regards the best (at least the most interesting) scenes for a pedestrian rambler. The gorgeous scenery of Borrowdale, the austere sublimities of Wastdalehead, of Langdalehead, or Mardale; these are too oppressive, in their colossal proportions and their utter solitudes, for encouraging a perfectly human interest. Now, taking Hawkshead as a centre, with a radius of about eight miles, one might describe a little circular tract which embosoms a perfect net-work of little valleys — separate wards or cells, as it were, of one large

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valley, walled in by the great primary mountains of the region. Grasmere, Easdale, Little Langdale, Tilberthwaite, Yewdale, Elter Water, Loughrigg Tarn, Skelwith, and many other little quiet nooks, lie within a single division of this labyrinthine district. All these are within one summer afternoon's ramble. And amongst these, for the years of his boyhood, lay the daily excursions of Wordsworth.

I do not conceive that Wordsworth could have been an amiable boy; he was austere and unsocial, I have reason to think, in his habits; not generous; and, above all, not self-denying. Throughout his later life, with all the benefits of a French discipline in the lesser charities of social intercourse, he has always exhibited a marked impatience of those particular courtesies of life. Not but he was kind and obliging where his services would cost him no exertion; but I am pretty certain that no consideration would ever have induced Wordsworth to burthen himself with a lady's reticule, parasol, shawl, 'or anything that was hers.' Mighty must be the danger which would induce him to lead her horse by the bridle. Nor would he, without some demur, stop to offer her his hand over a stile. Freedom — unlimited, careless, insolent freedom — unoccupied possession of his own arms — absolute control over his own legs and motions — these have always been so essential to his comfort, that in any case where they were likely to become questionable, he would have declined to make one of the party. Meantime, we are not to suppose that Wordsworth, the boy, expressly sought for solitary scenes of nature amongst woods and mountains, with a direct conscious anticipation of imaginative pleasure, and loving them with a pure, disinterested love, on their own separate account. These are feelings beyond boyish nature, or, at all events, beyond

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boyish nature trained amidst the necessities of social intercourse. Wordsworth, like his companions, haunted the hills and the vales for the sake of angling, snaring birds, swimming, and sometimes of hunting, according to the Westmoreland fashion, on foot; for riding to the chase is quite impossible, from the precipitous nature of the ground. It was in the course of these pursuits, by an indirect effect growing gradually upon him, that Wordsworth became a passionate lover of nature, at the time when the growth of his intellectual faculties made it possible that he should combine those thoughtful passions with the experience of the eye and the ear.

There is, amongst the poems of Wordsworth, one most ludicrously misconstrued by his critics, which offers a philosophical hint upon this subject of great instruction. I will preface it with the little incident which first led Wordsworth into a commentary upon his own meaning. One night, as often enough happened, during the Peninsular war, he and I had walked up Dunmail Raise, from Grasmere, about midnight, in order to meet the carrier who brought the London newspapers, by a circuitous course from Keswick. The case was this: — Coleridge, for many years, received a copy of the *Courier*, as a mark of esteem, and in acknowledgment of his many contributions to it, from one of the proprietors, Mr. Daniel Stewart. This went up in any case, let Coleridge be where he might, to Mrs. Coleridge; for a single day, it staid at Keswick, for the use of Southey; and, on the next, it came on to Wordsworth, by the slow conveyance of a carrier, plying with a long train of carts between Whitehaven and Kendal. Many a time the force of the storms or floods would compel the carrier to stop on his route, five miles short of Grasmere, at Wythburn, or even eight miles short, at Legberthwaite. But, as there was

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always hope until one or two o'clock in the morning, often and often it would happen that, in the deadly impatience for earlier intelligence, Wordsworth and I would walk off to meet him about midnight, to a distance of three or four miles. Upon one of these occasions, when some great crisis in Spain was daily apprehended, we had waited for an hour or more, sitting upon one of the many huge blocks of stone which lie scattered over that narrow field of battle on the desolate frontier of Cumberland and Westmoreland, where King Dun Mail, with all his peerage, fell, more than a thousand years ago. The time had arrived, at length, that all hope for that night had left us: no sound came up through the winding valleys that stretched to the north; and the few cottage lights, gleaming, at wide distances, from recesses amidst the rocky hills, had long been extinct. At intervals, Wordsworth had stretched himself at length on the high road, applying his ear to the ground, so as to catch any sound of wheels that might be groaning along at a distance. Once, when he was slowly rising from this effort, his eye caught a bright star that was glittering between the brow of Seat Sandal, and of the mighty Helvellyn. He gazed upon it for a minute or so; and then, upon turning away to descend into Grasmere, he made the following explanation: — 'I have remarked, from my earliest days, that, if under any circumstances, the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, or of steady expectation, then, if this intense condition of vigilance should suddenly relax, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object, or collection of objects, falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances. Just now, my ear was placed upon the stretch, in order to catch any sound of wheels that might come down upon the lake of

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Wythburn from the Keswick road: at the very instant when I raised my head from the ground, in final abandonment of hope for this night, at the very instant when the organs of attention were all at once relaxing from their tension, the bright star hanging in the air above those outlines of massy blackness, fell suddenly upon my eye, and penetrated my capacity of apprehension with a pathos and a sense of the Infinite, that would not have arrested me under other circumstances.' He then went on to illustrate the same psychological principle from another instance; it was an instance derived from that exquisite poem, in which he describes a mountain boy planting himself at twilight on the margin of some solitary bay of Windermere, and provoking the owls to a contest with himself, by 'mimic hootings,' blown through his hands; which of itself becomes an impressive scene to any one able to realize to his fancy the various elements of the solitary woods and waters, the solemn vesper hour, the solitary bird, the solitary boy. Afterwards, the poem goes on to describe the boy as waiting, amidst 'the pauses of his skill,' for the answers of the birds — waiting with intensity of expectation — and then, at length, when, after waiting to no purpose, his attention began to relax — that is, in other words, under the giving way of one exclusive direction of his senses, began suddenly to allow an admission to other objects — then, in that instant, the scene actually before him, the visible scene, would enter unawares —

'With all its solemn imagery' —

This complex scenery was —What?

> 'Was carried *far* into his heart,
> With all its pomp, and that uncertain heav'n received
> Into the bosom of the steady lake.'

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This very expression, 'far,' by which space and its infinities are attributed to the human heart, and to its capacities of re-echoing the sublimities of nature, has always struck me as with a flash of sublime revelation. On this, however, Wordsworth did not say anything in his commentary; nor did he notice the conclusion, which is this. After describing the efforts of the boy, and next the passive state which succeeded, under his disappointment, (in which condition it was that the solemn spectacle entered the boy's mind with effectual power, and with a semi-conscious sense of its beauty that would not be denied,) the poet goes on to say —

> 'And I suppose that I have stood
> A full half hour beside his quiet grave,
> Mute — for he died when he was ten years old.'

Wherefore, then, did the poet stand in the village churchyard of Hawkshead, wrapt in a trance of reverie, over the grave of this particular boy? 'It was,' says Lord Jeffrey, 'for that single accomplishment' — viz., the accomplishment of mimicing the Windermere owls so well that not men only — Coleridge, for instance, or Professor Wilson, or other connoisseurs of owl-music — might have been hoaxed, but actually the old birds themselves, grave as they seem, were effectually humbugged into entering upon a sentimental correspondence of love or friendship — almost regularly 'duplying,' 'replying,' and 'quadruplying,' (as Scotch law has it,) to the boy's original theme. But here, in this solution of Lord Jeffrey's, there is, at all events, a dismal oversight; for it is evident to the most careless reader that the very object of the poem is not the first or initial stage of the boy's history — the exercise of skill which led him, as an occasion, into a rigid and tense effort of attention — not

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this, but the second stage, the consequence of that attention. Even the attention was an effect, a derivative state; but the second stage, upon which the poet fixes his object, is an effect of that effect; and it is clear that the original notice of the boy's talent is introduced only as a *conditio sine qua non* — a notice without which a particular result (namely, the tense attention of expectation) could not have been made intelligible; as, again, without this result being noticed, the reaction of that action could quite as little have been made intelligible. Else, and but for this conditional and derivative necessity, but for this dependency of the essential circumstance upon the boy's power of mimicry, it is evident that the 'accomplishment' — which Lord Jeffrey so strangely supposes to have been the main object of the poet in recording the boy, and the main subject of his reverie by the side of his grave — never would have been noticed. It is difficult, indeed, to conceive a stronger evidence of that incoherency of thought under which Lord Jeffrey must have allowed himself to read Wordsworth than this very blunder.

But, leaving his Lordship, what *was* the subject of the poet's reverie? some reader may say. A poem ought to explain itself; and we cannot for a moment admit, as a justifying subject for reverie, any private knowledge which the poet might happen to have of the boy's character, or of the expectations he had chanced to raise amongst his friends. I will endeavor to say a word on this question; but, that I may not too much interrupt the narration, in a note. At the same time, let me remind the reader of one great and undeniable truth: it is a fact which cannot be controverted, except by the very thoughtless and the very unobserving, that scarcely one in a thousand of impassioned cases, scarcely one effect in a

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thousand of all the memorable effects produced by poets, can, upon any theories yet received amongst us, be even imperfectly explained. And, especially, this is true of original poetry. The cases are past numbering in which the understanding says, or seems to say, one thing, impassioned nature another; and, in poetry, at least, Cicero's great rule will be found to fail — that '*nunquam aliud natura, aliud sapientia dicit;*' if, at least, we understand *sapientia* to mean dipassionate good sense. How, for instance, could plain good sense — how could the very finest understanding — have told any man, beforehand, that love in excess, amongst its other modes of waywardness, was capable of prompting such appellations as that of 'wretch' to the beloved object? Yet, as a fact, as an absolute fact of the experience, it is undeniable that it is among the impulses of love, in extremity, to clothe itself in the language of disparagement — *why*, is yet to be explained.

> 'Perhaps 'tis pretty
> To mutter and mock a broken charm;
> To dally with wrong that does no harm;
> Perhaps 'tis pretty to tie together
> Thoughts so all unlike each other;
> To feel, at each wild word, within,
> A sweet recoil of love and pity.
> And what if, in a world of sin' — &c. &c.

That is Coleridge's solution; and the amount of it is — first, that it is delightful to call up what we know to be a mere mimicry of evil, in order to feel its non-reality; to dally with phantoms of pain that do not exist: secondly, that such language acts by way of *contrast*, making the love more prominent by the contradictoriness of its expression: thirdly, that in a world of sin, where evil passions are so often called into action, and have thus

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matured the language of violence in a service of malignity, naturally enough the feeling of violence and excess stumbles into its old forms of expression, even when the excess happens to lie in the very opposite direction. All this seems specious, and is undoubtedly some part of the solution; and the verses are so fancifully beautiful, that they would recommend even a worse philosophy. But, after all, I doubt if the whole philosophy be given: and, in a similar attempt of Charles Lamb's, the case is not so much solved as further illustrated and amplified. Finally, if solved completely, this case is but one of multitudes which are furnished by the English drama: but (and I would desire no better test of the essential inferiority attaching to the French drama — no better argument of its having grown out of a radically lower nature) there is not, from first to last, throughout that vaunted field of the French literature, one case of what I may denominate the antinomies of passion — cases of self-conflict, in which the understanding says one thing, the impassioned nature of man says another thing. This is a great theme, however, and I dismiss it to a separate discussion.

So far, however, as I have here noticed it, this question has arisen naturally out of the account, as I was endeavoring to sketch it, of Wordsworth's attachment to nature in her grandest forms. It grew out of solitude and the character of his own mind; but the mode of its growth was indirect and unconscious, and in the midst of other more boyish or more worldly pursuits; and that which happened to the boy in mimicing the owls happened also to him. In moments of watching for the passage of woodcocks over the hills in moonlight nights, in order that he might snare them, oftentimes the dull gaze of expectation, after it was becoming hopeless, left him liable to effects of mountain scenery under accidents of nightly

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silence and solitude, which impressed themselves with a depth for which a full tide of success would have allowed no opening. And, as he lived and grew amongst such scenes from childhood to manhood, many thousands of such opportunities had leisure to improve themselves into permanent effects of character, of feeling, and of taste. Like Michael, he was in the heart of many thousand mists. Many a sight, moreover, such as meets the eye rarely of any, except those who haunt the hills and the tarns at all hours,* and all seasons of the year, had been seen, and neglected perhaps at the time, but afterwards revisited the eye and produced its appropriate effect in silent hours of meditation. In everything, perhaps, except in the redundant graciousness of heart which formed so eminent a feature in the moral constitution of that true philosopher; the character, the sensibility, and

* In particular, and by way of giving an illustration, let me here mention one of those accidental revelations that unfold new aspects of nature: it was one that occurred to myself. I had gone up at all times of the morning and the year, to an eminence, or rather a vast field of eminences, above Scor Crag, in the rear of Allan Bank, a Liverpool gentleman's mansion, from which is descried the deep and gloomy valley of Great Langdale. Not, however, for many years, had it happened that I found myself standing in that situation about four o'clock on a summer afternoon. At length, and on a favorable day, this accident occurred; and the scene which I then beheld, was one which I shall not wholly forget to my dying day. The effects arose from the position of the sun and of the spectator, taken in connection with a pendulous mass of vapor, in which, however, were many rents and openings, and through them, far below, at an abyss-like depth, was seen the gloomy valley, its rare cottages, and 'unrejoicing' fir-trees. I had beheld the scene many times before; I was familiar with its least important features, but now it was absolutely transfigured; it was seen under lights and mighty shadows, that made it no less marvellous to the eye than that memorable creation amongst the clouds and azure sky, which is described by the Solitary in 'The Excursion.' And, upon speaking of it to Wordsworth, I found that he had repeatedly witnessed the same impressive transfiguration; so that it is not evanescent, but dependent upon fixed and recoverable combinations of time and weather.

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the taste of Wordsworth, pursued the same course of development as in the education of the Scotch Pedler,* who gives so much of the movement to the progress of 'The Excursion.'

One of the most interesting among the winter amusements of the Hawkshead boys was that of skating on the adjacent lake. Esthwaite Water is not one of the deep lakes, as its neighbors of Windermere, Coniston, and Grasmere, are: consequently, a very slight duration of frost is sufficient to freeze it into a bearing strength. In this respect, Wordsworth found the same advantages in his boyhood as afterwards at the University; for the county of Cambridge is generally liable to shallow waters; and that University breeds more good skaters than all the rest of England. About the year 1810, by way of expressing an interest in *The Friend*, which Coleridge was just at that time publishing in weekly numbers, Wordsworth allowed Coleridge to print an extract from the poem on his own life, descriptive of the games celebrated upon the ice of Esthwaite by all who were able to skate: the mimic chases of hare and hounds, pursued long after the last orange gleam of light had died away from the western horizon — oftentimes far into the night — a circumstance which does not speak much for the discipline of the schools — or rather, perhaps, *does* speak much for the advantages of a situation so pure, and free from the usual perils of a town, as this primitive village of Hawkshead. Wordsworth, in this descriptive passage — which I wish that I had at this

* Amongst the various attempts to justify Wordsworth's choice of so humble and even mean an occupation for his philosopher, how strange that the weightiest argument of all should have been omitted — viz, the privilege attached to his functions of penetrating without offence, and naturally, and at periodic intervals, to every fireside.

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moment the means of citing, in order to amplify my account of his earliest tyrocinium — speaks of himself as frequently wheeling aside from his joyous companions to cut across the image of a star; and thus already, in the midst of sportiveness, and by a movement of sportiveness, half unconsciously to himself expressing the growing necessity of retirement to his habits of thought. At another period of the year, when the golden summer allowed the students a long season of early play before the studies of the day began, he describes himself as roaming, hand-in-hand, with one companion, along the banks of Esthwaite Water, chanting, with one voice, the verses of Goldsmith and of Gray — verses which, at the time of recording the fact, he had come to look upon as either in parts false in the principles of their composition, or, at any rate, as wofully below the tone of high poetic passion; but which, at that time of life, when the profounder feelings were as yet only germinating, filled them with an enthusiasm which he describes as brighter than the dreams of fever or of wine.

Meanwhile, how prospered the classical studies which formed the main business of Wordsworth at Hawkshead? Not, in all probability, very well; for, though Wordsworth is at this day a very sufficient master of the Latin language, and reads certain favorite authors, especially Horace, with a critical nicety, and with a feeling for the felicities of his composition that probably few have ever felt, I have reason to think that little of this skill had been obtained at Hawkshead. As to Greek, that is a language which Wordsworth has never had energy enough to cultivate with effect.

From Hawkshead, and, I believe, after he had entered his eighteenth year, (a time which is tolerably early on the English plan,) probably at the latter end of the

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year 1787, Wordsworth entered at St. John's College, Cambridge. St. John's ranks as the second college in Cambridge — the second as to numbers and influence, and general consideration; in the estimation of the Johnians as the first, or at least as coequal in all things with Trinity; from which, at any rate, the general reader will collect, that no such absolute supremacy is accorded to any society in Cambridge as in Oxford is accorded necessarily to Christ Church. The advantages of a large college are considerable, both to an idle man who wishes to lurk unnoticed in the crowd, and to the brilliant man, whose vanity could not be gratified by pre-eminence amongst a few. Wordsworth, though not idle as regarded his own pursuits, was so as regarded the pursuits of the place. With respect to them he felt — to use his own words — that his hour was not come; and that his doom for the present was a happy obscurity, which left him, unvexed by the torments of competition, to the genial enjoyment of his life in its most genial hours.

It will excite some astonishment when I mention that, on coming to Cambridge, Wordsworth actually assumed the beau, or, in modern slang, the 'dandy.' He dressed in silk stockings; had his hair powdered; and in all things plumed himself on his gentlemanly habits. To those who remember the slovenly dress of his middle and philosophic life, this will furnish matter for a smile.

Stranger still it is to tell, that, for the first time in his life, Wordsworth got 'bouzy' at Cambridge. It is but fair to add, that the first time was also the last time. But perhaps the strangest part of the story is the occasion of this drunkenness; which was in celebration of his first visit to the very rooms at Christ College once occupied by Milton — intoxication by way of homage to the most temperate of men, and this homage offered by one who

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has turned out himself to the full as temperate! Still one must grant a privilege — and he would be a churl that could frown on such a claim — a privilege and charter of large enthusiasm to such an occasion. And an older man than Wordsworth, at that era not fully nineteen, and a man even without a poet's blood in his veins, might have leave to forget his sobriety in such circumstances. Besides that, after all, I have heard, from Wordsworth's own lips, that he was not too far gone to attend chapel decorously during the very acmé of his elevation.

The rooms which Wordsworth occupied at St John's were singularly circumstanced; mementos of what is highest and what is lowest in human things solicited the eye and the ear all day long. If the occupant approached the out-doors prospect, in one direction, there was visible through the great windows in the adjacent chapel of Trinity, the statue of Newton 'with his silent face and prism,' memorials of the abstracting intellect, serene and absolute, emancipated from fleshly bonds. On the other hand, immediately below, stood the college kitchen; and, in that region, from noon to dewy eve, resounded the shrill voice of scolding from the female ministers of the head cook, never suffering the mind to forget one of the meanest amongst human necessities. Wordsworth, however, as one who passed much of his time in social gaiety, was less in the way of this annoyance than a profounder student would have been. Probably he studied little beyond French and Italian during his Cambridge life; not however at any time forgetting (as I had so much reason to complain, when speaking of my Oxonian contemporaries) the literature of his own country. It is true that he took the regular degree of A. B., and in the regular course; but this was won in those days by a mere nominal examination, unless where the mathematical attainments

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of the student prompted his ambition to contest the honorable distinction of Senior Wrangler. This, in common with all other honors of the University, is won in our days with far severer effort than in that age of relaxed discipline; but at no period could it have been won, let the malicious and the scornful say what they will, without an amount of mathematical skill very much beyond what has ever been exacted of its *alumni* by any other European university. Wordsworth was a profound admirer of the sublimer mathematics; at least of the higher geometry. The secret of this admiration for geometry lay in the antagonism between this world of bodiless abstraction and the world of passion. And here I may mention appropriately, and I hope without any breach of confidence, that, in a great philosophic poem of Wordsworth's, which is still in MS., and will remain in MS. until after his death, there is, at the opening of one of the books, a dream, which reaches the very *ne plus ultra* of sublimity in my opinion, expressly framed to illustrate the eternity and the independence of all social modes or fashions of existence, conceded to these two hemispheres, as it were, that compose the total world of human power — mathematics on the one hand, poetry on the other.

> 'The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
> ——— undisturbed by space or time;
> The other that was a god — yea, many gods —
> Had voices more than all the winds, and was
> A joy, a consolation, and a hope.'

I scarcely know whether I am entitled to quote — as my memory (though not refreshed by a sight of the poem for more than twenty years) would well enable me to do — any long extract; but thus much I may allowably say, as it cannot in any way affect Mr. Wordsworth's interests,

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that the form of the dream is as follows; and, by the way, even this form is not arbitrary; but, with exquisite skill in the art of composition, is made to arise out of the situation in which the poet had previously found himself, and is faintly prefigured in the elements of that situation. He had been reading 'Don Quixote' by the seaside; and, oppressed by the heat of the sun, he had fallen asleep whilst gazing on the barren sands before him. He dreams that, walking in some sandy wilderness of Africa, some endless Zahara, he sees, at a distance

> 'An Arab of the desert, lance in rest,
> Mounted upon a dromedary.'

The Arab rides forward to meet him; and the dreamer perceives, in the countenance of the rider, the agitation of fear, and that he often looks behind him in a troubled way, whilst in his hand he holds two books — one of which is Euclid's 'Elements;' the other, which is a book and yet not a book, seeming, in fact, a shell as well as a book, sometimes neither, and yet both at once. The Arab directs him to apply his ear; upon which —

> 'In an unknown tongue, which yet I understood,'

the dreamer says that he heard

> 'A wild prophetic blast of harmony,
> An ode, as if in passion utter'd, that foretold
> Destruction to the people of this earth
> By deluge near at hand.'

The Arab, with grave countenance, assures him that it is even so; that all was true which had been said; and that he himself was riding upon a divine mission, having it in charge

> 'To bury those two books;
> The one that held acquaintance with the stars,' &c.

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that is, in effect, to secure the two great interests of poetry and mathematics from sharing in the watery ruin. As he talks, suddenly the dreamer perceives that the Arab's

——— 'countenance grew more disturb'd,'

and that his eye was often reverted; upon which the dreaming poet also looks along the desert in the same direction; and in the far horizon he descries

——— 'a glittering light.'

What is it? he asks of the Arab rider. 'It is,' said he, 'the waters of the earth,' that even then were travelling on their awful errand. Upon which, the poets sees this apostle of the desert riding off,

'With the fleet waters of the world in chase of him.'

The sketch I have here given of this sublime dream sufficiently attests the interest which Wordsworth took in the peculiar studies of the place, and the exalted privilege which he ascribed to them of coeternity with 'the vision and the faculty divine' of the poet — the destiny common to both, of an endless triumph over the ruins of nature and time. Meantime, he himself travelled no farther in these studies than through the six elementary books, usually selected from the fifteen of Euclid. Whatever might be the interests of his speculative understanding, whatever his admiration, practically he devoted himself to the more agitating interests of man, social and political, just then commencing that vast career of revolution which has never since been still or stationary; interests which, in his mind, alternated, however, with another and different interest, in the grander forms of external nature, as found in mountainous regions. In obedience to this latter passion, it was — for a passion it had become — that during one of his

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long Cambridge vacations, stretching from June to November, he went over to Switzerland and Savoy, for a pedestrian excursion amongst the Alps; taking with him, for his travelling companion, a certain Mr. J——, of whom (excepting that he is once apostrophized in a sonnet, written at Calais in the year 1802) I never happened to hear him speak: whence I presume to infer, that Mr. J—— owed this flattering distinction, not so much to any intellectual graces of his society, as, perhaps, to his powers of administering 'punishment' (in the language of the fancy) to restive and mutinous landlords — for such were abroad in those days; people who presented huge reckonings with one hand, and, with the other, a huge cudgel, by way of opening the traveller's eyes to the propriety of paying them without demur. I do not positively know this to have been the case; but I have heard Wordsworth speak of the ruffian landlords who played upon his youth in the Grisons; and, however well qualified to fight his own battles, he might find, amongst such savage mountaineers, two combatants better than one.

Wordsworth's route, on this occasion, lay, at first, through Austrian Flanders, then (1788, I think) on the fret for an insurrectionary war against the capricious innovations of the Imperial coxcomb, Joseph II. He passed through the camps then forming, and thence ascended the Rhine to Switzerland; crossed the great St. Bernard; visited the Lake of Como, and other interesting scenes in the north of Italy, where, by the way, the tourists were benighted in a forest — having, in some way or other, been misled by the Italian clocks, and their peculiar fashion of striking round to twenty-four o'clock. On his return, Wordsworth published a quarto pamphlet of verses, describing, with very considerable effect and brilliancy, the grand scenery amongst which he had been

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moving. This poem, as well as another in the same quarto form, describing the English lake scenery of Westmoreland and Cumberland, addressed, by way of letter, 'to a young lady,' (viz., Miss Wordsworth,) are remarkable, in the first place, as the earliest effort of Wordsworth in verse, at least as his earliest publication; but, in the second place, and still more so, from their style of composition. 'Pure description,' even where it cannot be said, sneeringly, 'to hold the place of sense,' is so little attractive as the direct or exclusive object of a poem, and in reality it exacts so powerful an effort on the part of the reader to realize visually, or make into an apprehensible unity the scattered elements and circumstances brought together, that, inevitably and reasonably, it can never hope to be a popular form of composition; else it is highly probable that these 'Descriptive Sketches' of Wordsworth, though afterwards condemned as vicious in their principles of composition, by his own maturer taste, would really have gained him a high momentary notoriety with the public, had they been fairly brought under its notice: whilst, on the other hand, his revolutionary principles of composition, and his purer taste, ended in obtaining for him nothing but scorn and ruffian insolence. This seems marvellous; but, in fact, it is not so: it seems, I mean, *primâ facie* marvellous, that the inferior models should be fitted to gain a far higher reputation; but the secret lies here — that these were in a taste which, though frequently spurious and hollow, had been long reconciled to the public feelings, and which, besides, have a specific charm for certain minds, even apart from all fashions of the day; whereas, the other had to struggle against sympathies long trained in an opposite direction, to which the recovery of a healthier tone (even where nature had made it possible) presupposed a difficult process of wean-

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ing, and an effort of discipline for reorganizing the whole internal economy of the sensibilities, that is both painful and mortifying: for — and that is worthy of deep attention — the misgivings of any vicious or unhealthy state; the impulses and suspicious gleams of the truth struggling with cherished error; the instincts of light conflicting with darkness — these are the real causes of that hatred and intolerant scorn which is ever awakened by the first dawnings of new and important systems of truth. Therefore it is that Christianity was so much more hated than any mere novel variety of error. Therefore are the first feeble struggles of nature towards a sounder state of health, always harsh and discordant; for the false system which this change for the better disturbs, had, at least, this soothing advantage — that it was self-consistent. Therefore, also, was the Wordsworthian restoration of elementary power, and of a higher or transcendent truth of nature, (or, as some people vaguely expressed the case, of *simplicity*,) received at first with such malignant disgust. For there was a galvanic awakening in the shock of power, as it jarred against the ancient system of prejudices, which inevitably revealed so much of truth as made the mind jealous that all was not right, and just so far affected as to be dissatisfied with its existing creed, but not at all raised up to the level of the new creed; enlightened enough to descry its own wanderings, but not enough to recover the right road.

The more energetic, the more spasmodically potent are the throes of nature towards her own re-establishment in the cases of suspended animation, by drowning, strangling, &c, the more keen is the anguish of revival. And, universally, a transition state is a state of suffering and disquiet. Meantime, the early poems of Wordsworth, that *might* have suited the public taste so much better

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than his more serious efforts, if the fashion of the hour, or the sanction of a leading review, or the *prestige* of a name in the author, had happened to give them a season's currency, did in fact drop unnoticed into the market. Nowhere have I seen them quoted, no, not even since the author's victorious establishment in the public admiration. The reason may be, however, that not many copies were printed at first; no subsequent edition was ever called for; and yet, from growing interest in the author, every copy of the small impression had been studiously bought up. Indeed, I myself went to the publishers (Johnson's) as early as 1805 or 1806, and bought up all the remaining copies, (which were but six or seven of the Foreign Sketches, and two or three of the English,) as presents, and as *future* curiosities in literature to literary friends, whose interest in Wordsworth might assure one of a due value being put upon the poem. Were it not for this extreme scarcity, I am disposed to think that many lines or passages would long ere this have been made familiar to the public ear. Some are delicately, some forcibly picturesque; and the selection of circumstances is occasionally very original and felicitous. In particular, I remember this one, which presents an accident in rural life that must by thousands of repetitions have become intimately known to every dweller in the country, and yet had never before been consciously taken up for a poet's use. After having described the domestic cock as 'sweetly ferocious' — a prettiness of phraseology which he borrows from an Italian author — he notices those competitions or defiances which are so often carried on interchangeably from great distances: —

'Echo'd by faintly answering farms remote.'

This is the beautiful line in which he has caught and

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preserved so ordinary an occurrence — one, in fact, of the commonplaces, which lend animation and a moral interest to rural life.

After his return from this Swiss excursion, Wordsworth took up his parting residence at Cambridge, and prepared for a final adieu to academic pursuits and academic society.

It was about this period that the French Revolution broke out; and the reader who would understand its appalling effects — its convulsing, revolutionary effects upon Wordsworth's heart and soul — should consult the history of the Solitary, as given by himself in 'The Excursion;' for that picture is undoubtedly a leaf from the personal experience of Wordsworth: —

> 'From that dejection I was roused —
> 'But how?' —— &c.

Mighty was the transformation which it wrought in the whole economy of his thoughts; miraculous almost was the expansion which it gave to his human sympathies; chiefly in this it showed its effects — in throwing the thoughts inwards into grand meditations upon man, his final destiny, his ultimate capacities of elevation; and, secondly, in giving to the whole system of the thoughts and feelings a firmer tone, and a sense of the awful *realities* which surround the mind; by comparison with which the previous literary tastes seemed (even where they were fine and elegant, as in Collins, or Gray, unless where they had the self-sufficing reality of religion, as in Cowper) fanciful and trivial. In all lands this result was accomplished, and at the same time: Germany, above all, found her new literature the mere creation and product of this great moral tempest; and in Germany or England alike, the poetry was so entirely regenerated, thrown into

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moulds of thought and of feeling so new — so primary — so different from the old worn-out channels in which they had been trained to flow — that the poets everywhere felt themselves to be putting away childish things, and now at length — now first (as regarded the eighteenth century) entering upon the dignity and the sincere thinking of mature manhood.

Wordsworth, it is well known to all who know anything of his history, felt himself so fascinated by the gorgeous festival era of the Revolution — that era when the sleeping snakes which afterwards stung the national felicity, were yet covered with flowers — that he went over to Paris, and spent about one entire year between that city, Orleans, and Blois. There, in fact, he continued to reside almost too long. He had been sufficiently connected with public men to have drawn upon himself some notice from those who afterwards composed the Committee of Public Safety. And, as an Englishman, when the war had once obliterated the too fervent and too indulgent partiality, which, at an earlier period of the revolutionary movement, had settled upon the English name, he became an object of gloomy suspicion with those even who would have grieved that he should fall a victim to undistinguishing popular violence. Already *for* England, and in her behalf, he was thought to be that spy which (as Mr. Coleridge tells us, in his *Biographia Literaria*) afterwards he was accounted by Mr. Pitt's emissaries, in the worst of services *against* her. I doubt, however, (let me say it, by the way, without impeachment of Mr. Coleridge's veracity — for he was easily duped,) this whole story about Mr. Pitt's Somersetshire spies; and it has often struck me with astonishment, that Mr. Coleridge should have suffered his personal pride to take so false a direction as to court the humble distinction of having been sus-

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pected as a spy, in those very years when poor empty tympanies of men, such as G——, Thelwall, Holcroft, were actually recognized as enemies of the state, and worthy of a State surveillance, by Ministers so blind and grossly misinformed, as, on this point, were Pitt and Dundas. Had I been Coleridge, instead of saving Mr. Pitt's reputation with posterity by ascribing to him a jealousy which he or his agents had not the discernment to cherish, I would have boldly planted myself upon the fact, the killing fact, that he had utterly despised both myself, Coleridge to wit, and Wordsworth — even with Dogberry, *I* would have insisted upon that — 'Set down, also, that I am an ass!' I would have exulted in this fact; it should have been my glory — namely, that two men, whom, in their intellectual faculties, posterity will acknowledge as equal to any age, were scorned and slighted as too contemptible for fear; whilst others, so gross and vulgar in style of mind as this Holcroft, this Thelwall, this — (what is his name?) — were as brainlessly feared by Mr. Pitt's cabinet as ever Bottom was adored by Titania. What a perversion of pride! that Coleridge should have sought, by lending his ear to fables which Wordsworth's far sterner principle views as lies,*

* The reader, who may happen not to have seen Mr. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, is informed that Mr. Coleridge tells a long story about a man who followed and dogged himself and Mr. Wordsworth in all their rural excursions, under a commission (originally emanating from Mr. Pitt) for detecting some overt acts of treason, or treasonable correspondence; or, in default of either, some words of treasonable conversation. Unfortunately for his own interests as an active servant, capable of bagging a promising amount of game, within a week or so, even in a whole month, that spy had collected nothing at all as the basis of a report, excepting only something which they (Coleridge and Wordsworth, to wit,) were continually saying to each other, now in blame, now in praise, of one *Spy Nosy*; and this, praise and blame alike, the honest spy very naturally took to himself — seeing that the world accused him

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to gain the fanciful honor of standing upon Mr. Pitt's pocket-list of traitors and French spies; when, after all, they stood confessedly in that list as tenth-rate and most inconsiderable villains. Heavens! that was a strange ambition, that, rather than be wholly forgotten by Mr. Pitt, (in which fate there was, by possibility, a great dignity,) would seek to figure amongst the very rear-guard of his traitors!

In France, however, Wordsworth had a chance, in good earnest, of passing for the traitor, that, in England, no rational person ever thought him. He had chosen his friends carelessly; nor could any man, the most sagacious, have chosen them safely, in a time when the internal schisms of the very same general party brought with them worse hostilities and more personal perils than even, upon the broader divisions of party, could have attended the most *ultra* professions of anti-national politics, and when the rapid changes of position shifted the peril from month to month. One individual is specially recorded by Wordsworth, in the poem on his own life, as a man of the highest merit, and personal qualities the most brilliant, who ranked first upon the list of Wordsworth's friends; and this man was so far a safe friend, at

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of having a *nose* of unreasonable dimensions, and his own conscience accused him of being a spy. 'Now,' says Mr. Coleridge, 'the very fact was, that Wordsworth and I were constantly talking about Spinosa.' This story makes a very good Joe Miller; but, for other purposes, is somewhat damaged. However, there is one excellent story in the case. Some country gentlemen from the neighborhood of Nether Stowey, upon a party happening to discuss the probabilities that Wordsworth and Coleridge might be traitors and in correspondence with the French Directory, answered thus:—'Oh, as to that Coleridge, he's a rattle-brain, that will say more in a week than he will stand to in a twelve-month. But Wordsworth — that 's the traitor: why, God bless me, he's so close on the subject that, d—n me me if you 'll ever hear him open his lips on the subject from year's end to year's end!'

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one moment, as he was a republican general — finally, indeed, a commander-in-chief. This was Beaupuis; and the description of his character and position is singularly interesting. There is, in fact, a special value and a use about the case: it opens one's eyes feelingly to the fact, that, even in this thoughtless people, so full of vanity and levity — nevertheless, the awful temper of the times, and the dread burthen of human interests with which it was charged — had called to a consciousness of new duties — had summoned to an audit, as if at some great final tribunal, even the gay, radiant creatures that, under less solemn auspices, under the reign of a Francis I., or a Louis XIV., would have been the merest painted butterflies of the court-sunshine. This Beaupuis was a man of superb person — beautiful in a degree which made him a model of male beauty, both as to face and figure; and, accordingly, in a land where conquests of that nature were so easy, and the subjects of so trifling an effort, he had been distinguished, to his own as well as the public eyes, by a rapid succession of *bonnes fortunes* amongst women. Such, and so glorified by triumphs the most unquestionable and flattering, had the earthquake of the revolution found him. From that moment, he had no leisure, not a thought, to bestow upon his former selfish and frivolous pursuits. He was hurried, as one inspired by some high apostolic passion, into the service of the unhappy and desolate serfs amongst his own countrymen — such as are described, at an earlier date, by Madame de Sevigné, as the victims of feudal institutions; and one day as he was walking with Wordsworth in the neighborhood of Orleans, and they had turned into a little, quiet lane, leading off from a heath, suddenly they came upon the following spectacle: — A girl, seventeen or eighteen years old, hunger-bitten, and wasted to a meagre shadow,

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was knitting, in a dejected, drooping way; whilst to her arm was attached, by a rope, the horse, equally famished, that earned the miserable support of her family. Beaupuis comprehended the scene in a moment; and, seizing Wordsworth by the arm, he said — 'Dear English friend! — brother from a nation of freemen! — *that* it is that is the curse of our people, in their widest division; and to cure this, it is, as well as to maintain our work against the kings of the earth, that blood must be shed and tears must flow for many years to come!' At that time, the revolution had not fulfilled its purposes; as yet, the King was on the throne; the fatal 10th of August, 1792, had not dawned; and, as yet, there was safety for a subject of kings.* The irresistible stream was hurrying forwards.

* How little has any adequate power as yet approached this great theme! Not the Grecian stage — not 'the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes,' in any of its scenes, unfolds such tragical grouping of circumstances and situations as may be gathered from the memoirs of the time. The galleries and vast staircases of Versailles, at early dawn, on some of the greatest days — the tempestuous gathering of the mobs — the figure of the Duke of Orleans obscurely detected amongst them — the growing fury — the growing panic — the blind tumult — and the dimness of the event — all make up a scene worthy to blend with our time-hallowed images of Babylon or of Nineveh with the enemy in all her gates, Memphis or Jerusalem in their agonies. But, amongst all the exponents of the growing agitation that besieged the public mind, none is so profoundly impressive as the scene (every Sunday renewed) at the Chapel Royal. Even in the most penitential of the litanies, in the presence when most immediately confessed of God himself — when the antiphonies were chanted, one party singing, with fury and gnashing of teeth, *Salvum fac regem*, and another, with equal hatred and fervor, answering *Et Reginam* — the organ roared into thunder — the semi-chorus swelled into shouting — the menaces into defiance — the agitation into tempestuous fury — again the crashing semi-choir sang with shouts their *Salvum fac regem* — again the vengeful antiphony hurled back its *Et Reginam* — and one person, an eye-witness of these scenes, which mounted in violence on each successive Sunday, declares that, oftentimes, the semi-choral bodies were at the point of fighting with each other in the presence of the King.

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The King fell; and (to pause for a moment) how divinely is the fact recorded by Wordsworth, in the MS. poem on his own life, placing the awful scenes past and passing in Paris, under a pathetic relief from the description of the golden, autumnal day, sleeping in sunshine —

> 'When I
> Towards the fierce metropolis bent my steps
> The homeward road to England. From his throne
> The King had fallen' — &c.

What a picture does he give of the fury which there possessed the public mind; of the frenzy which shone in every eye, and through every gesture; of the stormy groups assembled at the Palais Royal, or the Tuilleries, with 'hissing factionists' for ever in their centre, 'hissing' from the self-baffling of their own madness, and incapable from wrath of speaking clearly; of fear already creeping over the manners of multitudes; of stealthy movements through back streets; plotting and counter-plotting in every family; feuds to extermination, dividing children of the same house for ever; scenes such as those of the Chapel Royal, (now silenced on that *public* stage,) repeating themselves daily amongst private friends; and, to show the universality of this maniacal possession — that it was no narrow storm discharging its fury by local concentration upon a single city, but that it overspread the whole realm of France — a picture is given, wearing the same features, of what passed daily at Orleans, Blois, and other towns. The citizens are described in the attitudes they assumed at the daily coming in of the post from Paris; the fierce sympathy is portrayed, with which they echoed back the feelings of their compatriots in the capital: men of all parties had been there up to this time; aristocrats as well as democrats — and one in particular of the former class is put forward as a repre-

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sentative of his class. This man, duly as the hour arrived which brought the Parisian newspapers, read restlessly of the tumults and insults amongst which the Royal Family now passed their days; of the decrees by which his own order were threatened or assailed; of the self-expatriation, now continually swelling in amount, as a measure of despair on the part of myriads, as well priests as gentry — all this and worse he read in public; and still as he read,

> 'his hand
> Haunted his sword like an uneasy spot
> In his own body.'

In short, as there never has been so strong a national convulsion diffused so widely with equal truth, it may be asserted that no describer, so powerful, or idealizing so magnificently what he deals with, has ever been a real living spectator of parallel scenes. The French, indeed, it may be said, are far enough from being a people profound in feeling. True; but of all people, they most exhibit their feeling on the surface; are the most *demonstrative* (to use a modern term;) and most of all mark their feelings by outward expression of gesticulation and fervent enunciation: not to insist upon the obvious truth — that even a people of shallow feeling may be deeply moved by tempests which uproot the forest of a thousand years' growth; by changes in the very organization of society, that throw all things, for a time, into one vast anarchy; and by murderous passions, alternately the effect and the cause of that same chaotic anarchy. Now, it was in this autumn of 1792, as I have already said, that Wordsworth parted finally from his illustrious friend — for, all things considered, he may be justly so entitled — the gallant Beaupuis. This great season of public

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trial had searched men's natures; revealed their real hearts; brought into light and action qualities oftentimes not suspected by their possessors; and had thrown men, as in elementary states of society, each upon his own native resources, unaided by the old conventional forces of rank and birth. Beaupuis had shone to unusual advantage under this general trial; he had discovered, even to the philosophic eye of Wordsworth, a depth of benignity, very unusual in a Frenchman; and not of local, contracted benignity, but of large, illimitable, apostolic devotion to the service of the poor and the oppressed — a fact the more remarkable as he had all the pretensions in his own person of high birth and high rank; and, so far as he had any personal interest embarked in the struggle, should have allied himself with the aristocracy. But of selfishness in any shape, he had no vestiges: or, if he had, it showed itself in a slight tinge of vanity; yet, no — it was not vanity, but a radiant quickness of sympathy with the eye which expressed admiring love — sole relic of the chivalrous devotion once limited to the service of ladies. Now, again, he put on the garb of chivalry; it was a chivalry the noblest in the world, which opened his ear to the Pariah and the oppressed all over his mis-organized country. A more apostolic fervor of holy zealotry in this great cause, had not been seen since the days of Bartholomew las Casas, who showed the same excess of feeling in another direction. This sublime dedication of his being to a cause which, in his conception of it, extinguished all petty considerations for himself, and made him thenceforwards a creature of the national will — 'a son of France,' in a more eminent and loftier sense than according to the heraldry of Europe — had

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extinguished even his sensibility to the voice of worldly honor: 'injuries,' says Wordsworth —

> 'injuries
> Made him more gracious.'

And so utterly had he submitted his own will or separate interests to the transcendent voice of his country, which, in the main, he believed to be now speaking authentically for the first time since the foundations of Christendom, that, even against the motions of his own heart, he adopted the hatreds of the young Republic, growing cruel in his purposes towards the ancient oppressor, out of very excess of love for the oppressed; and, against the voice of his own order, as well as in stern oblivion of many early friendships, he became the champion of democracy in the struggle everywhere commencing with prejudice or feudal privilege. Nay, he went so far upon the line of this new crusade against the evils of the world, that he even accepted, with a conscientious defiance of his own inevitable homage to the erring spirit of loyalty embarked upon that cause, a commission in the Republican armies preparing to move against La Vendée; and, finally, in that cause, as commander-in-chief, he laid down his life. 'He perished,' says Wordsworth —

> —— 'perished, fighting in supreme command,
> Upon the banks of the unhappy Loire.'

Homewards fled all the English from a land which now was fast filling its prisons, and making ready the shambles for its noblest citizens. Thither also came Wordsworth; and then he spent his time for a year and more, in London chiefly, overwhelmed with shame and despondency for the disgrace and scandal brought upon liberty by the atrocities committed in that holy name. Upon

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this subject he dwells with deep emotion in the poem on his own life; and he records the awful triumph for retribution accomplished, which possessed him when crossing the sands of the great Bay of Morecamb from Lancaster to Ulverstone; and hearing from a horseman who passed him, in reply to his question — *was there any news?* — 'Yes, that Robespierre had perished.' Immediately, a passion seized him, a transport of almost epileptic fervor, prompting him, as he stood alone upon this perilous* waste of sands, to shout aloud anthems of thanksgiving for this great vindication of eternal justice. Still, though justice was done upon one great traitor to the cause, the cause itself was overcast with clouds too heavily to find support and employment for the hopes of a poet who had believed in a golden era ready to open upon the prospects of human nature. It gratified and solaced his heart, that the indignation of mankind should have wreaked itself upon the chief monsters that had outraged their nature and their hopes; but for the present he found it necessary to comfort his disappointment, by turning away from politics to studies less capable of deceiving his expectations.

* That tract of the lake country which stretches southwards from Hawkshead and the lakes of Esthwaite, Windermere, and Coniston, to the little town of Ulverstone, (which may be regarded as the metropolis of the little romantic English Calabria, called Turness,) is divided from the main part of Lancashire by the estuary of Morecamb. The sea retires with the ebb tide to a vast distance, leaving the sands passable for a few hours for horses and carriages. But partly from the daily variation in these hours, partly from the intricacy of the pathless track which must be pursued, and partly from the galloping pace at which the returning tide comes in, many fatal accidents are continually occurring — sometimes to the too venturous traveller who has slighted the aid of guides — sometimes to the guides themselves, when baffled and perplexed by mists. Gray the poet mentions one of the latter class, as having then recently occurred under affecting circumstances. Local tradition records a long list of interesting cases.

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From this period, therefore — that is, from the year 1794 – 95 — we may date the commencement of Wordsworth's entire self-dedication to poetry as the study and main business of his life. Somewhere about this period, also, (though, according to my remembrance of what Miss Wordsworth once told me, I think one year or so later,) his sister joined him; and they began to keep house together: once at Race Down, in Dorsetshire; once at Clevedon, on the coast of Somersetshire; then amongst the Quantock Hills, in the same county, or in that neighborhood; and, at length, at Alfoxton, a beautiful country-house, with a grove and shrubbery attached, belonging to Mr. St. Aubyn, a minor, and let (I believe) on the terms of keeping the house in repair. Whilst resident at this last place it was, as I have generally understood, and in the year 1797 or 1798, that Wordsworth first became acquainted with Coleridge; though, possibly, in the year I am wrong; for it occurs to me that, in a poem published in 1796, there is an allusion to a young writer, of the name of Wordsworth, as one who had something austere in his style, but otherwise was more original than any other poet of the age; and it is probable that this, and knowledge of the poetry, would be subsequent to a personal knowledge of the author, considering the little circulation which any poetry of a Wordsworthian stamp would be likely to attain at that time.

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CHAPTER XII.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

It was at Alfoxton that Miss Mary Hutchinson visited her cousins the Wordsworths; and there, or previously, in the north of England, at Stockton-upon-Tees and Darlington, that the attachment began between Miss Hutchinson and Wordsworth, which terminated in their marriage about the beginning of the present century. The marriage took place in the north; somewhere, I believe, in Yorkshire; and, immediately after the ceremony, Wordsworth brought his bride to Grasmere; in which most lovely of English valleys he had previously obtained, upon a lease of seven or eight years, the cottage in which I found him living at my first visit to him in November, 1807. I have heard that there was a paragraph inserted on this occasion in the *Morning Post* or *Courier* — and I have an indistinct remembrance of having once seen it myself — which described this event of the poet's marriage in the most ludicrous terms of silly pastoral sentimentality; the cottage being described as 'the abode of content and all the virtues,' the vale itself in the same puerile slang, and the whole event in a style of allegorical trifling about the muses, &c. The masculine and severe taste of Wordsworth made him peculiarly open to annoyance from such absurd trifling; and, unless his sense of the ludicrous overpowered his graver feelings, he must have been much

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displeased with the paragraph. But, after all, I have understood that the whole affair was an unseasonable jest of Coleridge's or Lamb's.

To us who, in after years, were Wordsworth's friends, or at least intimate acquaintances — viz., to Professor Wilson and myself — the most interesting circumstance in this marriage, the one which perplexed us exceedingly, was the very possibility that it should ever have been brought to bear. For we could not conceive of Wordsworth as submitting his faculties to the humilities and devotion of courtship. That self-surrender — that prostration of mind, by which a man is too happy and proud to express the profundity of his service to the woman of his heart — it seemed a mere impossibility that ever Wordsworth should be brought to feel for a single instant; and what he did not sincerely feel, assuredly he was not the person to profess. Ah, happy, happy days! — in which, for a young man's heart that is deep and fervid in his affections, and passionate in his admirations, there is but one presence upon earth, one glory, one heaven of hope! — days how fugitive, how incapable of return, how imperishable to the heart of all that a man has lived! Wordsworth, I take it upon myself to say, had not the feelings within him which make this total devotion to a woman possible. There never lived the woman whom he would not have lectured and admonished under circumstances that should have seemed to require it; nor would he have conversed with her in any mood whatever without wearing an air of mild condescension to her understanding. To lie at her feet, to make her his idol, to worship her very caprices, and to adore the most unreasonable of her frowns — these things were impossible to Wordsworth; and, being so, never could he, in any emphatic sense, have been a lover.

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A lover, therefore, in any passionate sense of the word, Wordsworth could not have been. And, moreover, it is remarkable that a woman who could dispense with that sort of homage in her suitor, is not of a nature to inspire such a passion. That same meekness which reconciles her to the tone of superiority and freedom in the manner of her suitor, and which may afterwards in a wife become a sweet domestic grace, strips her of that too charming irritation, captivating at once and tormenting, which lurks in feminine pride. If there be an enchantress's spell yet surviving in this age of ours, it is the haughty grace of maidenly pride — the womanly sense of dignity, even when most in excess, and expressed in the language of scorn — which tortures a man and lacerates his heart, at the same time that it pierces him with admiration.

> 'Oh, what a world of scorn looks beautiful
> In the repelling glances of her eye!'

And she who spares a man the agitations of this thraldom, robs him no less of its divinest transports. Wordsworth, however, who never could have laid aside his own nature sufficiently to have played *his* part in such an impassioned courtship, by suiting himself to this high sexual pride with the humility of a lover — and, perhaps, quite as little have enjoyed the spectacle of such a pride, or have viewed it in any degree as an attraction — it would to him have been a pure vexation. Looking down even upon the lady of his heart, as upon the rest of the world, from the eminence of his own intellectual superiority — viewing her, in fact, as a child — he would be much more disposed to regard any airs of feminine disdain she might assume, as the impertinence of girlish levity, than as the caprice of womanly pride. He would not, indeed, like Petruchio, have hinted a possibility that

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he might be provoked to box her ears — for any mode of unmanly roughness would have seemed abominable to his nature, with the meanest of her sex; but much I fear that, in any case of dispute, he would have called even his mistress, 'Child! child!' and perhaps even (but this I do not say with the same certainty) might have bid her hold her tongue. Think of that, reader, with such lovers as I am placing in ideal contrast with these! — image to yourself the haughty beauty, and the majestic wrath, never to be propitiated after hearing such irreverent language — nay, worse than irreverent language — language implying disenchantment! Yet still, it may be said, can a man forget — absolutely and in all moments forget — his intellectual superiority? You yourself, for example, who write these sketches, did it follow of necessity that the woman you loved should be equal (or seem equal in your own eyes) to yourself in intellect? No; far from it. I could not, perhaps, have loved, with a perfect love, any woman whom I had felt to be my own equal intellectually; but then I never thought of her in that light, or under that relation. When the golden gate was opened, when the gate moved upon its golden hinges that opened to me the paradise of her society — when her young, melodious laughter sounded in my too agitated ear — did I think of any claims that *I* could have? Too happy if I might be permitted to lay all things at her feet, all things that I could call my own, or ever hope to do so — yes, though it had been possible that by power divine I should possess the earth, and the inheritance of the earth —

'The sea, and all which they contain.' *

What was intellect, what was power, what was empire, if I had happened to possess them all in excess! These

* 'Paradise Regained.'

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things were not of the nature of, had no common nature with, did not resemble, were no approximation to, the sweet angelic power — power infinite, power deathless, power unutterable, which formed her virgin dowry. O heart, why art thou disquieted? Tempestuous, rebellious heart! oh, wherefore art thou still dreaming of things so long gone by, of expectations that could not be fulfilled, that, being mortal, must, in some point, have a mortal taint! Empty, empty thoughts! vanity of vanities! Yet no; not always; for sometimes, after days of intellectual toil, when half the whole world is dreaming — I wrap my head in the bed-clothes, which hide even the faintest murmurs yet lingering from the fretful day —

> 'The gaudy, blabbing, and remorseful day;'

and then through blinding tears I see again that golden gate; again I stand waiting at the entrance; until dreams come that carry me once more to the Paradise beyond.

If, however, no lover, in a proper sense — though from many exquisite passages one might conceive that at some time of his life he was, as especially from the inimitable stanzas beginning:

> 'When she I loved was strong and gay,
> And like a rose in June;'

or perhaps (but less powerfully so, because here the passion, though profound, is less the *peculiar* passion of love) from the impassioned lamentation for 'the pretty Barbara,' beginning —

> 'Tis said that some have died for love:
> And here and there, amidst unhallow'd ground
> In the cold north,' &c. &c.: —

yet, if no lover, or (which some of us have sometimes thought) a lover disappointed at some earlier period, by

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the death of her he loved, or by some other fatal event, (for he always preserved a mysterious silence on the subject of that 'Lucy,' repeatedly alluded to or apostrophized in his poems, and I have heard, from gossiping people about Hawkshead, some snatches of tragical story, which, after all, might be an idle semi-fable, improved out of slight materials) — let this matter have been as it might — at all events he made, what for him turns out, a happy marriage. Few people have lived on such terms of entire harmony and affection as he has lived with the woman of his final choice. Indeed, the sweetness, almost unexampled, of temper, which, in her early and middle years, shed so sunny a radiance over Mrs. Wordsworth's manners, sustained by the happy life she led, the purity of her conscience, and the uniformity of her good health, made it impossible for anybody to have quarrelled with *her;* and whatever fits of ill temper Wordsworth might have — for, with all his philosophy, he had such fits, though rarely — met with no fuel to support them, except in the more irritable temperament of his sister. She was all fire, and an ardor, which, like that of the first Lord Shaftesbury,

'O'er-inform'd its tenement of clay;'

and, as this ardor looked out in every gleam of her wild eyes, (those 'wild eyes,' so finely noticed in the 'Tintern Abbey') as it spoke in every word of her self-baffled utterance, as it gave a trembling movement to her very person and demeanor — easily enough it might happen, that any apprehension of an unkind word should with her kindle a dispute. It might have happened; and yet, to the great honor of both, having such impassioned temperaments, rarely it did happen — and this was the more remarkable, as I have been assured that both were, in

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childhood, irritable or even ill-tempered; and they were constantly together; for Miss Wordsworth was always ready to walk out — wet or dry, storm or sunshine, night or day; whilst Mrs. Wordsworth was completely dedicated to her maternal duties, and rarely left the house, unless when the weather was tolerable, or, at least, only for short rambles. I should not have noticed this trait in Wordsworth's occasional manners, had it been gathered from domestic or confidential opportunities. But, on the contrary, the first two occasions on which, after months' domestic intercourse with Wordsworth, I first became aware of his possible ill-humor and peevishness, were so public, that others, and those strangers, must have been equally made aware of the scene.

Having brought down the history of Wordsworth to the time of his marriage, I am reminded by that event to mention the singular good fortune, in all points of worldly prosperity, which has accompanied him through life. His marriage — the capital event of life — was fortunate; so were all the minor occasions of a prosperous life. He has himself described, in his 'Leech-Gatherer,' the fears that, at one time, or at least in some occasional moments of his life, haunted him, lest at some period or other he might be reserved for poverty. 'Cold, pain, and hunger, and all fleshly ills,' occurred to his boding apprehension —

> 'And mighty poets in their misery dead.'
> 'He thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
> The sleepless soul that perished in its pride;
> Of him who walked in glory and in joy,
> Beside his plough upon the mountain-side.'

And, at starting on his career of life, certainly no man had plainer reasons for anticipating the worst evils that have ever persecuted poets, excepting only two reasons which might warrant him in hoping better; and these

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two were — his great prudence, and the temperance of his daily life. He could not be betrayed into foolish engagements; he could not be betrayed into expensive habits. Profusion and extravagance had no hold over him, by any one passion or taste. He was not luxurious in anything; was not vain or even careful of external appearances — (not at least since he had left Cambridge, and visited a mighty nation in civil convulsions;) was not, even in the article of books, expensive. Very few books sufficed him; he was careless habitually of all the current literature, or indeed of any literature that could not be considered as enshrining the very ideal, capital, and elementary grandeur of the human intellect. It will be seen, further on, that, in this extreme limitation of his literary sensibilities, he was as much assisted by that accident of his own intellectual condition, which the Germans of our days have so usefully brought forward to the consciousness, and by which so many anomalies of opinion are solved — viz., his extreme, intense, unparalleled *onesidedness*, *(einseitigkeit,)* as by any peculiar sanity of feeling. Thousands of books, that have given the most genuine and even rapturous delight to millions of ingenuous minds, for Wordsworth were absolutely a dead letter — closed and sealed up from his sensibilities and his powers of appreciation, not less than colors from a blind man's eye. Even the few books which his peculiar mind had made indispensable to him, were not so in the degree which they would have been to a man of more sedentary habits. He lived in the open air; and the enormity of pleasure which both he and his sister drew from the common appearances of nature and their everlasting variety — variety so infinite, that, if no one leaf of a tree, or shrub, according to Leibnitz's principle, ever exactly resembled another in all its filaments, and their

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arrangement, still less did any one day ever repeat another in all its pleasurable elements — this pleasure was to him, in the stead of many libraries, —

> 'One impulse, from a vernal wood,
> Could teach him more of Man,
> Of moral evil, and of good,
> Than all the sages can.'

And he, we may be sure, who could draw,

> ——— 'even from the meanest flower that blows,
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears;'

to whom the mere daisy, the pansy, the primrose, could furnish pleasures — not the puerile ones which his most puerile and worldly insulters imagined, but pleasures drawn from depths of reverie and meditative tenderness far beyond all power of *their* hearts to conceive: — that man would hardly need any large variety of books. In fact, there were only two provinces of literature in which Wordsworth could be looked upon as well read — Poetry and Ancient History. Nor do I believe that he would much have lamented, on his own account, if all books had perished, excepting the entire body of English poetry, and, perhaps, 'Plutarch's* Lives.'

With these simple or rather austere tastes, Wordsworth (it might seem) had little reason to fear poverty — certainly not with any moderate income; but meantime he had none. About the time when he left college, I have good grounds for believing that his whole regular income was precisely = 0. Some fragments must have survived from the funds devoted to his education; and with these,

* I do not mean to insinuate that Wordsworth was at all in the dark about the inaccuracy and want of authentic weight attaching to Plutarch as an historian; but his business with Plutarch was not for purposes of research: he was satisfied with his fine moral effects.

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no doubt, he supported the expenses of his continental tours, and his year's residence in France. But, at length, cold, pain, and hunger, and 'all fleshly ills,' must have stared him in the face pretty earnestly. And hope of longer evading an unpleasant destiny of daily toil in some form or other there seemed absolutely none.

'For,' as he himself expostulates with himself —

> 'For how can he expect that others should
> Sow for him, build for *him*, and, at his call,
> Love him, who for himself will take no thought at all?'

In this dilemma he had all but resolved, as Miss Wordsworth once told me, to take pupils; and perhaps *that*, though odious enough, was the sole resource he had; for, with all his immeasurable genius, Wordsworth has not, even yet, and from long experience, acquired any popular talent of writing for the current press; and, at that period of his life, he was gloomily unfitted for bending to such a yoke. In this crisis of his fate, possibly it might be — a fact which a mere accident once caused Miss Wordsworth to mention to me, in a whispering tone, and (as if ashamed of it) she never recurred to it — that Wordsworth, for once, and once only, became a martyr to some nervous affection. *That* raised pity; but I could not forbear smiling at the remedy, or palliation, which his few friends adopted. Every night they played at cards with him, as the best mode of beguiling his sense of distress, whatever it might be; *cards*, which, in any part of the thirty-and-one years since *I* have known Wordsworth, could have had as little power to interest him, or to cheat him of sorrow, as marbles or a kite — (*Scotice*, a dragon!) However, so it was; for my information could not be questioned.

The crisis, as I have said, had arrived for determining the future color of his life. Memorable it is, that exactly

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in those critical moments when some decisive step had first become necessary, there happened the first instance of Wordsworth's good luck; and equally memorable that, at measured intervals throughout the long sequel of his life since then, a regular succession of similar but superior God-sends have fallen in, to sustain his expenditure, duly as it grew with the growing claims upon his purse. A more fortunate man, I believe, dose not exist than Wordsworth. The aid which now dropped from heaven, as it were, to enable him to range at will in paths of his own choosing, and

> 'Finally array
> His temples with the muses' diadem,'

came in the shape of a bequest from Raisley Calvert, a young man of good family in Cumberland, who died about this time of pulmonary consumption. A very remarkable young man he must have been, this Raisley Calvert, to have discerned, at this early period, that future superiority in Wordsworth which so few people suspected. He was the brother of a Cumberland gentleman, whom I have seen; a generous man, doubtless; for he made no sort of objections (though legally, I have heard, he might) to his brother's farewell memorial of regard; a good man to all his dependents, as I have generally understood, in the neighborhood of Windy Brow, his mansion, near Keswick; and, as Southey always said, (who must know better than I could do,) a man of strong natural endowments; else, as his talk was of oxen, I might have made the mistake of supposing him to be, in heart and soul, what he was in profession — a mere farming country gentleman, whose ambition was chiefly planted upon turning up mighty turnips. The sum left by Raisley Calvert was £900; and it was laid

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out in an annuity. This was the basis of Wordsworth's prosperity in life; and upon this he has built up, by a series of accessions, in which each step, taken separately for itself, seems perfectly natural, whilst the total result has undoubtedly something wonderful about it, the present goodly edifice of his fortunes. Next in the series, came the present Lord Lonsdale's repayment of his predecessor's debt. Upon that, probably, it was that Wordsworth felt himself entitled to marry. Then, I believe, came some fortune with Miss Hutchinson; then — that is, fourthly — some worthy uncle of the same lady was pleased to betake himself to a better world, leaving to various nieces, and especially to Mrs. Wordsworth, something or other — I forget what, but it was expressed by thousands of pounds. At this moment, Wordsworth's family had begun to increase; and the worthy old uncle, like everybody else in Wordsworth's case, (I wish I could say the same in my own,) finding his property very clearly 'wanted,' and, as people would tell him, 'bespoke,' felt how very indelicate it would look for him to stay any longer; and so off he moved. But Wordsworth's family, and the wants of that family, still continued to increase; and the next person — viz., the fifth — who stood in the way, and must, therefore, have considered himself rapidly growing into a nuisance, was the Stamp-Distributor for the county of Westmoreland. About March, 1814, I think it was, that his very comfortable situation was wanted. Probably it took a month for the news to reach him; because in April, and not before, feeling that he had received a proper notice to quit, he, good man, this stamp-distributor, like all the rest, distributed himself and his office into two different places — the latter falling, of course, into the hands of Wordsworth.

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This office, which it was Wordsworth's pleasure to speak of as 'a little one,' yielded, I believe, somewhere about £500 a year. Gradually, even *that*, with all former sources of income, became insufficient, which ought not to surprise anybody; for a son at Oxford, as a gentleman commoner, would spend, at the least, £300 per annum; and there were other children. Still it is wrong to say that it *had* become insufficient; as usual, it had not come to that; but, on the first symptoms arising that it soon would come to that, somebody, of course, had notice to consider himself a sort of nuisance elect — in this case, it was the distributor of stamps for the county of Cumberland. His district was absurdly large: and what so reasonable as that he should submit to a Polish partition of his profits — no, not Polish; for, on reflection, such a partition neither was nor could be attempted with regard to an actual incumbent. But then, since people had such consideration for him as not to remodel the office so long as he lived, on the other hand, the least he could do for 'people' in return, so as to show his sense of this consideration, was not to trespass on so much goodness longer than necessary. Accordingly, here, as in all cases before, the *Deus ex machinâ* who invariably interfered when any *nodus* arose in Wordsworth's affairs, such as could be considered *vindice dignus*, caused the distributor to begone into a region where no stamps are wanted, about the very month, or so, when an additional £400 per annum became desirable. This, or perhaps more, was understood to have been added by the new arrangement, to the Westmoreland distributorship: the small towns of Keswick and Cockermouth, together with the important one of Whitehaven, being severed, under this regulation, from their old dependency, or Cumberland, (to which geographically

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they belonged,) and transferred to the small territory of rocky Westmoreland, the sum total of whose inhabitants was, at that time, not much above 50,000; of which number, one third, or nearly so, might be collected into the only important town of Kendal; but, of the other two thirds, a larger proportion was a simple agricultural or pastoral population, than anywhere else in England. In Westmoreland, therefore, it may be supposed that the stamp demand could not have been so great, not, perhaps, by three quarters, as in Cumberland; which, besides having a population of 160,000, had more and larger towns. The result of this new distribution, was something that approached to an equalization of the districts — giving to each, as was said in round terms, a thousand a year; but, in more accurate terms, perhaps £900.

Thus I have traced Wordsworth's ascent through its several steps and stages, to what, for his moderate desires and habits so philosophic, may be fairly considered opulence. And it must rejoice every man, who joins in the public homage *now* rendered to his powers, (and what man is to be found that more or less does not?) to hear, with respect to one so lavishly endowed by nature, that he has not been neglected by fortune; that he has never had the finer edge of his sensibilities dulled by the sad anxieties, the degrading fears, the miserable dependencies of debt; that he has been blessed with competency even when poorest; has had hope and cheerful prospects in reversion, through every stage of his life; that at all times he has been liberated from *reasonable* anxieties about the final interests of his children; that at all times he has been blessed with leisure, the very amplest that ever man enjoyed, for intellectual pursuits the most delightful; yes, that even for those delicate and coy pursuits, he has possessed, in combination, all the condi-

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tions for their most perfect culture — the leisure, the ease, the solitude, the society, the domestic peace, the local scenery — Paradise for his eye, in Miltonic beauty, lying outside his windows, Paradise for his heart, in the perpetual happiness of his own fireside; and, finally, when increasing years might be supposed to demand something more of modern luxuries, and expanding intercourse with society in its most polished forms, something more of refined elegancies, that his means, still keeping pace, in almost arithmetical ratio, with his wants, had shed the graces of art upon the failing powers of nature, had stripped infirmity of discomfort, and (so far as the necessities of things will allow) had placed the final stages of life, by means of many compensations, by universal praise, by plaudits reverberated from senates, benedictions wherever his poems have penetrated, honor, troops of friends — in short, by all that miraculous prosperity can do to evade the primal decrees of nature — had placed the final stages upon a level with the first. This report of Wordsworth's success in life will rejoice thousands of hearts. And a good nature will sympathize with that joy, will exult in that exultation, no matter for any private grievances, and with a *non obstante* to any wrong, however stinging, which it may suppose itself to have suffered. Yet, William Wordsworth, nevertheless, if you ever allowed yourself to forget the *human* tenure of these mighty blessings — if, though wearing your honors justly — most justly, as respects A. and B., this man and that man — you have forgotten that *no* man can challenge such trophies by any absolute or meritorious title, as respects the dark powers which give and take away — if, in the blind spirit of presumption, you have insulted the less prosperous fortunes of a brother, frail, indeed, but not dishonorably frail, and in his very frailty

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— that is, in his failing exertions — and for the deficient measure of his energies, (doubtless too much below the standard of reasonable expectations,) able to plead that which you never cared to ask — then, if (instead of being sixty-eight years old) you were $6\frac{8}{2}$, I should warn you to listen for the steps of Nemesis approaching from afar; and, were it only in relation to your own extremity of good fortune, I would say, in the case of your being a young man, lavish as she may have been hitherto, and for years to come may still be —

> 'Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!
> Her audit, though delay'd, answered must be,
> And her *quietus* is —— to render thee.' *

But now, reverting to the subject of Wordsworth's prosperity, I have numbered up six separate stages of good luck — six instances of pecuniary showers emptying themselves into his very bosom, at the very moments when they *began* to be needed, on the first symptoms that they might be wanted — accesses of fortune stationed, upon his road, like repeating frigates, connecting, to all appearance, some preconcerted line of operations; and, amidst the tumults of chance, wearing as much the air of purpose and design, as if they supported a human plan — so much the more, also, to a thoughtful observer, as the subject of this overflowing favor from the blind goddess, happened, by the rarest of accidents, to be that man whom many of us would have declared the most worthy of that favor, most of us, perhaps, as in the case of Themistocles, would have declared, at the very least, second best. I have come down to the sixth case. Whether there were any seventh, I do not know: but confident I feel, that, had a seventh been required by

* Shakspeare's Sonnets.

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circumstances, a seventh would have happened. At the same time, every reader will, of course, understand me to mean, that not only was it utterly out of the power or will of Wordsworth to exert any, the very slightest influence upon these cases, not only was this impossible — not only was it impossible to the moral nature of Wordsworth, that he should even express that sort of interest in the event, which is sometimes intimated to the incumbents of a place or church-living by sudden inquiries after their health from eager expectants — but also, in every one of the instances recorded, he could have had not the slightest knowledge beforehand of any interest at issue for himself. This explanation I make to forestal the merest possibility of misapprehension. And yet, for all that, so true it is, that still, as Wordsworth needed a place or a fortune, the holder of that place or fortune was immediately served with a summons to surrender it — so certainly was this impressed upon my belief, as one of the blind necessities, making up the prosperity and fixed destiny of Wordsworth, that, for myself — had I happened to know of any peculiar adaptation in an estate or office of mine, to an existing need of Wordsworth's — forthwith, and with the speed of a man running for his life, I would have laid it down at his feet. 'Take it,' I would have said — 'take it — or in three weeks I shall be a dead man.'

Well — let me pause: I think the reader is likely, by this time, to have a slight notion of *my* notion of Wordsworth's inevitable prosperity — and the sort of *lien* that he had upon the incomes of other men who happened to stand in his way. The same prosperity attended the other branches of the family, with the single exception of John, the brother who perished in the Abergavenny: and even he was prosperous up to the moment of his fatal accident.

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As to Miss Wordsworth, who will, by some people, be classed amongst the non-prosperous, I rank her amongst the most fortunate of women; or, at least, if regard be had to that period of life which is most capable of happiness. Her fortune, after its repayment by Lord Lonsdale, was, much of it, confided, with a sisterly affection, to the use of her brother John; and most of it perished in his ship. How much I never felt myself entitled to ask; but certainly a part was on that occasion lost irretrievably. Either it was that only a partial insurance had been effected, or else the nature of the accident, being in home waters, (off the coast of Dorsetshire,) might, by the nature of the contract, have taken the case out of the benefit of the policy. This loss, however, had it even been total, for a single sister amongst a family of flourishing brothers, could not be of any lasting importance. A much larger number of voices would proclaim her to have been unfortunate in life, because she made no marriage connection; and certainly the insipid as well as unfeeling ridicule which descends so plentifully from vulgar minds, upon those women who, perhaps from strength of character, have refused to make such a connection where it promised little of elevated happiness, *does* make the state of singleness somewhat of a trial to the patience of many; and to many the cruelty of this trial has proved a snare for beguiling them of their honorable resolutions. Doubtless the most elevated form, and the most impassioned, of human happiness cannot be had out of marriage. But, as the opportunities are rare in which all the conditions concur for *such* connections, how important it is that the dignity of noble-minded (and, in the lowest case, of firm-minded) women, should be upheld by society in the honorable election they make of a self-dependent state of virgin seclusion, by preference to a heartless marriage!

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Such women, as Mrs. Trollope justly remarks, fill a place in society which, in their default, could not be supplied, and are disposable for duties requiring a tenderness and a punctuality that could not be hoped from women pre-occupied with household or maternal claims. In another point, Mrs. Trollope is right: few women live unmarried from necessity — few indeed. Miss Wordsworth, to *my* knowledge, had several offers — amongst them, one from Hazlitt; all, without a moment's hesitation, she rejected decisively. And she did right. A happier life, by far, was hers in youth, coming, as near as difference of scenery and difference of relations would permit, to that which was promised to Ruth — the Ruth of her brother's * creation — by the youth who came from Georgia's shore; for, though not upon American savannas, or Canadian lakes —

> 'With all their fairy crowds
> Of islands, that together lie
> As quietly as spots of sky
> Amongst the evening clouds' —

yet, amongst the loveliest scenes of sylvan England, and (at intervals) of sylvan Germany — amongst lakes, too, far better fitted to give the *sense* of their own character than the inland seas of America, and amongst mountains as romantic and loftier than many of the chief ranges in that country — her time fleeted away like some golden age, or like the life of primeval man; and she, like Ruth, was for years allowed

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* 'The Ruth of her brother's creation:' — so I express it; because so much in the development of the story and situations necessarily belongs to the poet. Else, for the mere outline of the story, it was founded upon fact: Wordsworth himself told me, in general terms, that the case which suggested the poem, was that of an American lady, whose husband forsook her at the very place of embarkation from England, under circumstances and under expectations, upon her part, very much the same as those of Ruth. I am afraid, however, that the husband was an attorney.

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'To run, though *not* a bride,
A sylvan huntress, by the side'

of him to whom, like Ruth, she had dedicated her days; and to whose children, afterwards, she dedicated a love like that of mothers. Dear Miss Wordsworth! How noble a creature did she seem when I first knew her! — and when, on the very first night which I passed in her brother's company, he read to me, in illustration of something he was saying, a passage from Fairfax's Tasso, ending pretty nearly with these words —

'Amidst the broad fields and the endless wood
The lofty lady kept her maidenhood' —

I thought that, possibly, he had his sister in his thoughts. Yet 'lofty' was hardly the right word. Miss Wordsworth was too ardent and fiery a creature to maintain the reserve essential to dignity; and dignity was the last thing one thought of in the presence of one so artless, so fervent in her feelings, and so embarrassed in their utterance — sometimes, also, in the attempt to check them. It must not, however, be supposed that there was any silliness or weakness of enthusiasm about her. She was under the continual restraint of severe good sense, though liberated from that false shame which, in so many persons, accompanies all expressions of natural emotion; and she had too long enjoyed the ennobling conversation of her brother, and his admirable comments on the daily reading which they pursued in common, to fail in any essential point of logic or propriety of thought. Accordingly, her letters, though the most careless and unelaborate — nay, the most hurried that can be imagined — are models of good sense and just feeling. In short, beyond any person I have known in this world, Miss Wordsworth was the creature of impulse; but, as a woman most thoroughly virtuous and

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well-principled, as one who could not fail to be kept right by her own excellent heart, and as an intellectual creature from her cradle, with much of her illustrious brother's peculiarity of mind — finally, as one who had been, in effect, educated and trained by that very brother — she won the sympathy and the respectful regard of every man worthy to approach her. All of us loved her — by which *us* I mean especially Professor Wilson and myself, together with such Oxford or Cambridge men, or men from Scotland, as either of us or as others introduced to her society. And many a time, when the Professor and myself — travelling together in solitary places, sleeping in the same bedroom, or (according to accidents of wayfaring life) in the same bed — have fallen into the most confidential interchange of opinions upon a family in which we had both so common and so profound an interest, whatever matter of anger or complaint we might find or fancy in others, Miss Wordsworth's was a name privileged from censure; or, if a smile were bestowed upon some eccentricity or innocent foible, it was with the tenderness that we should have shown to a sister. Properly, and in a spirit of prophecy, was she named *Dorothy;* for, as that name apparently predestines her who bears it to figure rather in the character of aunt than of mother, (insomuch, that I have rarely happened to hear this name, except, indeed, in Germany, without the prefix of aunt,) so, also, in its Greek meaning,* *gift of God*, well did this name prefigure the relation in which she stood to Wordsworth, the mission with which she was charged — to wait upon

* Of course, therefore, it is essentially the same name as *Theodora* — the same elements being only differently arranged. Yet how opposite is the impression upon the mind! and chiefly, I suppose, from the too prominent effect of this name in the case of Justinian's scandalous wife.

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him as the tenderest and most faithful of domestics; to love him as a sister; to sympathize with him as a confidante; to counsel him as one gifted with a power of judging that stretched as far as his own for producing; to cheer him and sustain him by the natural expression of her feelings — so quick, so ardent, so unaffected — upon the probable effect of whatever thoughts, plans, images he might conceive; finally, and above all other ministrations, to ingraft, by her sexual sense of beauty, upon his masculine austerity that delicacy and those graces, which else (according to the grateful acknowledgments of his own maturest retrospect) it would not have had.

> 'The blessing of my later years
> Was with me when I was a boy:
> She gave me hopes, she gave me fears,
> A heart the fountain of sweet tears.
> . . . . . .
> And love, and thought, and joy.'

And elsewhere he describes her, in a philosophic poem, still in MS., as one who planted flowers and blossoms with her feminine hand upon what might else have been an arid rock — massy, indeed, and grand, but repulsive from the severity of its features. I may sum up in one brief abstract the sum total of Miss Wordsworth's character, as a companion, by saying, that she was the very wildest (in the sense of the most natural) person I have ever known; and also the truest, most inevitable, and, at the same time, the quickest and readiest in her sympathy with either joy or sorrow, with laughter or with tears, with the realities of life or the larger realities of the poets!

Meantime, amidst all this fascinating furniture of her mind, won from nature, from solitude, from enlightened companionship, Miss Wordsworth was as thoroughly deficient (some would say painfully deficient — I say charm-

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ingly deficient) in ordinary female accomplishments, as '*Cousin* Mary,' in Miss Mitford's delightful sketch. French, she might have barely enough to read a plain modern page of narrative; Italian, I question whether any; German, just enough to insult the German literati, by showing how little she had found them or their writings necessary to her heart. The 'Luise' of Voss, the 'Hermann und Dorothea' of Goethe, she had begun to translate, as young ladies do 'Telemaque;' but, like them, had chiefly cultivated the first two pages; with the third, she had a slender acquaintance, and with the fourth, she meditated an intimacy at some future day. Music, in her solitary and out-of-doors life, she could have little reason for cultivating; nor is it possible that any woman can draw the enormous energy requisite for this attainment, upon a *modern* scale of perfection, out of any other principle, than that of vanity (at least of great value for social applause) or of deep musical sensibility; neither of which belonged to Miss Wordsworth's constitution of mind. But, as everybody agrees in our days to think this accomplishment of no value whatever, and, in fact, *unproduceable*, unless in an exquisite state of culture, no complaint could be made on that score, nor any surprise felt. But the case in which the irregularity of Miss Wordsworth's education *did* astonish one, was in that part which respected her literary knowledge. In whatever she read, or neglected to read, she had obeyed the single impulse of her own heart; where that led her, *there* she followed: where that was mute or indifferent, not a thought had she to bestow upon a writer's high reputation, or the call for some acquaintance with his works, to meet the demands of society. And thus the strange anomaly arose, of a woman deeply acquainted with some great authors, whose works lie pretty much out of the fashionable beat; able,

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moreover, in her own person, to produce brilliant effects; able, on some subjects, to write delightfully, and with the impress of originality upon all she uttered — and yet ignorant of great classical works in her own mother tongue, and careless of literary history, unless where it touched upon some topic of household interest, in a degree which at once exiled her from the rank and privileges of *blue-stockingism.*

The reader may perhaps have objected silently to the illustration drawn from Miss Mitford, that 'Cousin Mary' does not effect her fascinations out of pure negations. Such negations, from the mere startling effect of their oddity in this present age, might fall in with the general current of her attractions; but Cousin Mary's undoubtedly lay in the *positive* witcheries of a manner and a character, transcending, by force of irresistible nature, (as in a similar case recorded by Wordsworth in 'The Excursion,') all the pomp of nature and art united, as seen in ordinary creatures. Now, in Miss Wordsworth, there were certainly no 'Cousin Mary' fascinations of manner and deportment, that snatch a grace beyond the reach of art: *there* she was indeed painfully deficient; for hurry mars and defeats even the most ordinary expression of the feminine character, its gentleness: abruptness and trepidation leave often a joint impression of what seems for an instant both rudeness and ungracefulness: and the least painful impression was that of unsexual awkwardness; — but the point in which Miss Wordsworth made the most ample amends for all that she wanted of more customary accomplishments, was, this very originality and native freshness of intellect, which settled with so bewitching an effect upon some of her writings, and upon many a sudden remark or ejaculation, extorted by something or other that struck her eye, in the clouds, or in coloring, or in accidents of light

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and shade, of form, or combination of form. To talk of her 'writings,' is too pompous an expression, or at least far beyond any pretensions that she ever made for herself. Of poetry she has written little indeed; and that little not, in my opinion, of much merit. The verses published by her brother, and beginning — 'Which way does the wind come?' meant only as nursery lines, are certainly wild and pretty; but the other specimen is likely to strike most readers as feeble and trivial in the sentiment. Meantime, the book which is in very deed a monument to her power of catching and expressing all the hidden beauties of natural scenery, with a felicity of diction, a truth, and strength, that far transcend Gilpin, or professional writers on those subjects, is her record of a tour in Scotland, made about the year 1802. This book, unless my recollection of it, from a period now gone by for thirty years, has deceived me, is absolutely unique in its class: and, though it never could be very popular, from the minuteness of its details, and the luxuriation of the descriptions, yet I believe no person has ever been favored with a sight of it, that has not regretted that it is not published. Its own extraordinary merit, apart from the interest which *now* invests the name of Wordsworth, could not fail to procure purchasers for one edition, on its first appearance.

Coleridge was of the party at first; but afterwards, under some attack of rheumatism, found or thought it necessary to leave them. Melancholy it would be at this time, thirty-six years and more from the era of that tour, to read it under the afflicting remembrances of all which has been suffered in the interval by two at least out of the three who composed the travelling party; for I fear that Miss Wordsworth has suffered not much less than Coleridge: and, in any general expression of it, from the same

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cause — viz., an excess of pleasurable excitement and luxurious sensibility, sustained in youth by a constitutional glow from animal causes, but drooping as soon as that was withdrawn. It is painful to point a moral from any story connected with those whom one loves or has loved; painful to look for one moment towards any 'improvement' of such a case, especially where there is no reason to tax the parties with any criminal contribution to their own sufferings, except through that relaxation of the will and its potential energies, through which most of us, at some time or other — I myself too deeply and sorrowfully — stand accountable to our own consciences. Not, therefore, with any more intention of speaking in a monitorial or censorial character, than in passing, after dark, through Grasmere churchyard, and trespassing a little to the left, I could be supposed to have the intention of trampling upon the grave of one who lies buried near the pathway, and whom once I loved in extremity, do I here notice a defect in Miss Wordsworth's self-education of something that might have mitigated the sort of suffering which, more or less, ever since the period of her too genial, too radiant youth, I suppose her to have struggled with. I have mentioned the narrow basis on which her literary interests had been made to rest — the exclusive character of her reading, and the utter want of pretension, and of all that looks like *blue-stockingism* in the style of her habitual conversation and mode of dealing with literature. Now, to me it appears, upon reflection, that it would have been far better had Miss Wordsworth condescended a little to the ordinary mode of pursuing literature; better for her own happiness if she *had* been a blue-stocking: or, at least, if she had been, in good earnest, a writer for the press, with the pleasant cares and solicitudes of one who has some little ventures, as it were, on that vast ocean.

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We all know with how womanly and serene a temper literature has been pursued by Joanna Baillie, by Miss Mitford, and other women of admirable genius — with how absolutely no sacrifice or loss of feminine dignity they have cultivated the profession of authorship; and, if we could hear their report, I have no doubt that the little cares of correcting proofs, and the forward-looking solicitudes connected with the mere business arrangements of new publications, would be numbered amongst the minor pleasures of life; whilst the more elevated cares, connected with the intellectual business of such projects, must inevitably have done much to solace the troubles, which, as human beings, they cannot but have experienced; and even to scatter flowers upon their path. Mrs. Johnstone, of Edinburgh, has pursued the profession of literature — the noblest of professions, and the only one open to both sexes alike — with even more assiduity, and as a *daily* occupation; and, I have every reason to believe, with as much benefit to her own happiness, as to the instruction and amusement of her readers: for the petty cares of authorship are agreeable, and its serious cares are ennobling. More especially is such an occupation useful to a woman without children, and without any *prospective* resources; resources in objects that involve hopes growing and unfulfilled. It is too much to expect of any woman (or man either) that her mind should support itself in a pleasurable activity, under the drooping energies of life, by resting on the past or on the present; some interest in reversion, some subject of hope from day to day, must be called in to reinforce the animal fountains of good spirits. Had that been opened for Miss Wordsworth, I am satisfied that she would have passed a more cheerful middle-age, and would not, at any period, have yielded to that nervous depression which, I grieve to hear,

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has clouded her latter days. Nephews and nieces, whilst young and innocent, are as good almost as sons and daughters to a fervid and loving heart that has carried them in her arms from the hour they were born. But, after a nephew has grown into a huge hulk of a man, six feet high, and as stout as a bullock; after he has come to have children of his own, lives at a distance, and finds occasion to talk chiefly of oxen and turnips — no offence to him — he ceases to be an object of any very profound sentiment. There is nothing in such a subject to rouse the flagging pulses of the heart, and to sustain a fervid spirit, to whom, at the very best, human life offers little of an adequate or sufficing interest, unless when idealized by the magic of the mighty poets. Farewell, Miss Wordsworth! farewell, impassioned Dorothy! I have not seen you for many a day — shall never see you again perhaps; but shall attend your steps with tender thought, so long as I hear of you living: so will Professor Wilson; and, from two hearts at least, that loved and admired you in your fervid prime, it may sometimes cheer the gloom of your depression to be assured of never-failing remembrance, full of love and respectful pity.

Here ceases my record of the life and its main incidents, so far as they are known to me, of William Wordsworth; to which, on account of the important services which she has rendered him; on account of the separate interest which, apart from those services, belongs to her own mind and character; on account of the singular counterpart which in some features they offer to those of her brother; and, on account of the impressive coincidence and parallelism in this remarkable dedication of Dorothy to William Wordsworth, with that of Mary to Charles Lamb — I have thought that it would be a proper *complement* of the whole record, to subjoin a very especial notice of his

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sister. Miss Wordsworth would have merited a separate notice in any biographical dictionary of our times, had there even been no William Wordsworth in existence.

I have traced the history of each until the time when I became personally acquainted with them; and, henceforwards, anything which it may be interesting to know with respect to either, will naturally come forward, not in a separate narrative, but in connection with my own life; for, in the following year, I became myself the tenant of that pretty cottage in which I found them; and from that time, for many years, my life flowed on in daily union with theirs.

END OF VOL. I.

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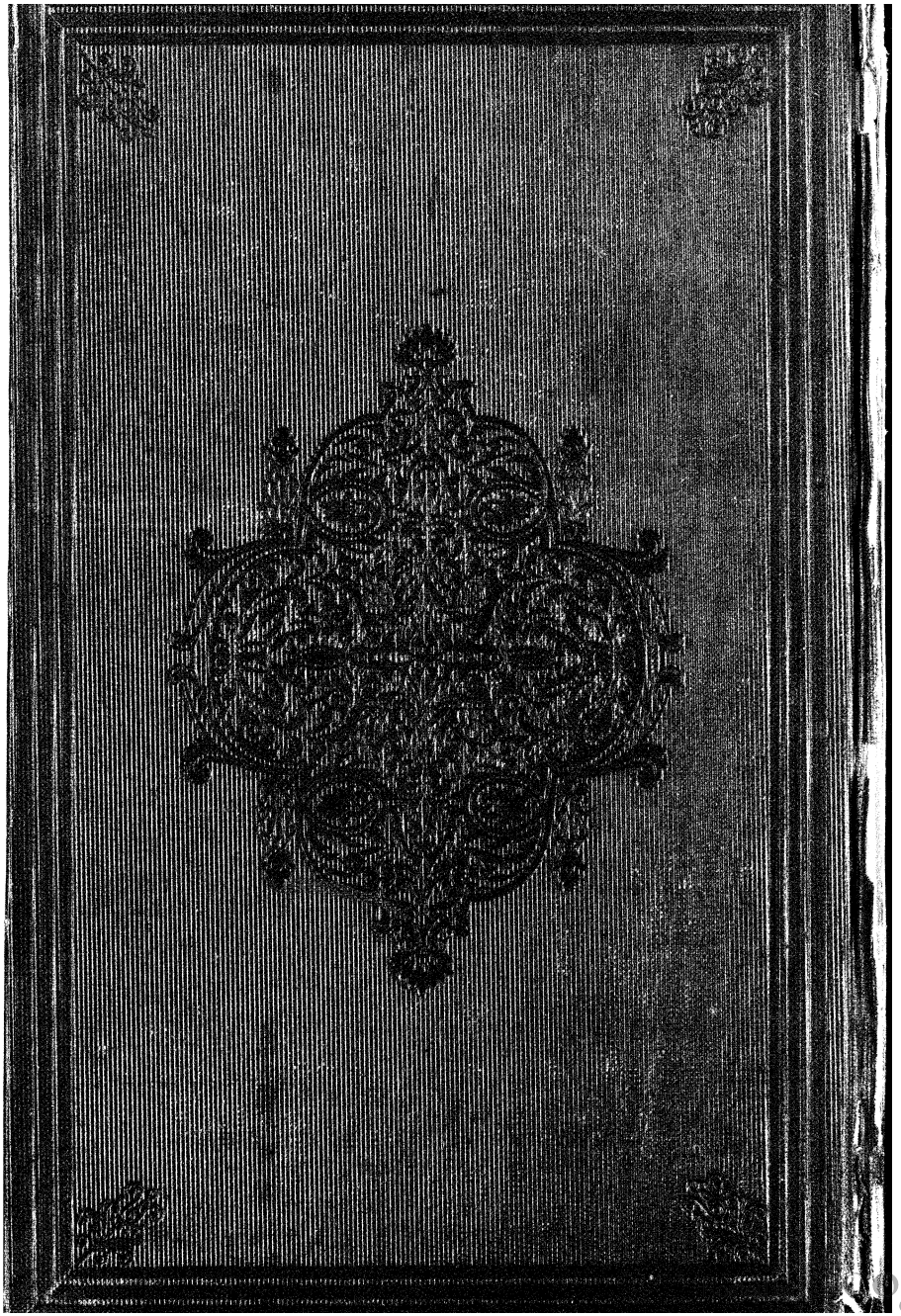
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